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Brill's Companion to Statius

Edited by

W. J. Dominik, C. E. Newlands, and K. Gervais



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Preface

Statius (c. 45–96 CE) is a key figure in the history of Latin literature. Janus-like, his poetry draws upon the rich legacy of Augustan and Hellenistic poetry as well as Neronian; it also looks forward to the shaping of new aesthetic principles and genres in late antique and medieval literature. Since Statius, after languishing in neglect for several centuries, has in the past forty years finally again aroused serious critical interest and literary appreciation, it seemed timely to accept Brill's invitation to produce the *Brill's Companion to Statius*; we, the editors, are grateful to Brill for taking this initiative.

Statius wrote at an important juncture in imperial history—in the last years of the reign of Domitian (81–96 CE) and of the Flavian dynasty (70–96 CE)—when hopes for a return to the republic were definitively crushed and Rome was being fashioned into a cosmopolitan, imperial power on an unprecedented scale with buildings of immense grandeur such as the Colosseum; after Augustus, Domitian was the most prolific builder of the city of Rome. Inevitably the writings of Tacitus and Suetonius on Domitian's "reign of terror" in the 90s have colored perceptions of Statius' poetry, while the flourishing of the arts and literature under Domitian—with the three major epic poets Valerius Flaccus, Silius Flaccus, and Statius and the epigrammatist Martial—have been relatively overlooked.

Our major objectives in planning this volume have been to represent a broad range of critical perspectives on Statius' poetry and to offer a historical perspective on the vagaries of his reception from late antiquity onwards. We have sought to offer these varied perspectives partly by including scholars from institutions in a number of countries with different scholarly traditions, namely USA, England, Wales, Canada, Australia, France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Greece. While our aim has been to avoid the polarities involving Statius' style and politics that have circulated around his poetry, we have endeavoured at the same time to encourage discussion and debate among the contributors to this volume (as reflected in the numerous cross-references), which necessarily entails critical agreement and disagreement with each other and other scholars. Many contributors had the opportunity to share their chapters and receive feedback at the Statius International Conference organized by Cecilia Criado and William J. Dominik and held at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain in June 2013. The editors express their appreciation to the University of Santiago de Compostela and Brill for sponsoring this Conference, which included Statian scholars not only from the countries mentioned above but also from Portugal and Mexico.

By studying the poetry of Statius from a variety of vantage points, *Brill's Companion to Statius* aims to offer a full and complex picture of this poet's critical role in Roman literary history and imperial culture. The *Companion* offers detailed approaches to all three of Statius' major works—the *Thebaid*, *Achilleid*, and *Silvae*. It thus serves both as an introduction to Statius' poetry and as a stimulus to further research; it is intended to appeal to a varied readership of students and scholars in the Humanities. It is our hope that *Brill's Companion to Statius* not only will illuminate the importance of Statius' poetry for literary, social, and political studies but also that it will confirm his standing as a powerful and innovative figure in Latin literature.

We express our warm gratitude to a number of people and institutions for their help in the production of this volume. To all our contributors we offer our sincere thanks for their patience, good humor, and care during its long production; in particular, we are grateful to Robert Edwards for bringing the illustration used on the cover to our attention. We express our thanks to James Holland (Texas Tech University), who offered comments on various chapters; Andrew Zissos (University of California, Irvine), who read and commented upon a draft of the introductory chapter; and to Agis Marinis (University of Patras / Hellenic Open University), who helped with the proofreading. We are indebted to Gordon Turner (University of Otago) for his editorial work and to Tim Wright (University of Western Ontario) for his substantial assistance in compiling the indices. In addition, we are extremely grateful not only to the staff at Brill—namely Tessel Jonquière, Jennifer Pavelko, Caroline van Erp, and Irene van Rossum—but also to Dinah Rapliza, who handled the production process of this book on behalf of Brill, for their impeccable professionalism and unflagging patience. Finally, we express our appreciation to the University of Otago, its Division of Humanities, and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Western Ontario for the award of grants that assisted us in the completion of this book.

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February 2015

Texts and Abbreviations

Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Works

Abbreviations of ancient works are mainly those listed in:

Hornblower, S. and Spawforth, A. (eds.) (1996) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3rd edn. Oxford.

Hammond, N. G. L. and Scullard, H. H. (eds.) (1970) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 2nd edn. Oxford.

Glare, P. G. W. *et al.* (ed.) (1996) *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Rev. edn. Oxford.

Liddell, H. G., Scott, R. and Jones, H. S. (eds.) (1940) *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th edn. Oxford.

Abbreviations for ancient and later works not found in the above include:

Abelard, *Comm. Rom.*

Peter Abelard, *Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*

Auson. *Mos.*

Ausonius, *Mosella*

Claud.

Claudian

Carm. Min.

Carmina Minora

Epith. Hon. et Mar.

Epithalamium Dictum Honorio et Mariae

Olyb. et Prob.

Panegyricus Dictus Olybrio et Probino

Consulibus

IV Cons. Hon.

Panegyricus Dictus Honorio Augusto

Consuli IV

Rapt. Pros.

De Raptu Proserpinae

Ruf.

In Rufinum

Dante

Dante

Conv.

Convivio

Inf.

Inferno

Purg.

Purgatorio

Dracont.

Dracontius

Laud. Dei

De Laudibus Dei

Rom.

Romulea

Erasmus, *Copia*

Erasmus, *De Duplici Copia Verborum ac Rerum*

Jerome, *Adv. Rufin.*

Jerome, *Apologiae Adversus Libros Rufini*

Paul. Nol. <i>Carm.</i>	Paulinus of Nola, <i>Carmina</i>
Pol.	Poliziano
<i>Man.</i>	<i>Manto</i>
<i>Oratio</i>	<i>Oratio Super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis</i>
Prudent. <i>Psych.</i>	Prudentius, <i>Psychomachia</i>
<i>Togail</i>	<i>Togail na Tebe</i>

Modern Works

References to modern works in the chapters of this volume appear by scholarly surname, year and page references. References to scholars by name and page references only are to their chapters in this volume. Abbreviations of modern works are mainly those listed in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edn). Abbreviations not found there include:

L&S	Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. (eds.) (1879) <i>A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary</i> . New York.
OLD	Glare, P. G. W. (ed.) (1996) <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> . Rev. edn. Oxford.
SH	Lloyd-Jones, H. and Parsons, P. (eds.) (1983) <i>Supplementum Hellenisticum</i> . Berlin.

A Note on the Greek and Latin Texts

The editions of Statius' works used most often in this volume are Hill (1996, *Thebaid*), Courtney (1992, *Silvae*), Dilke (1954, *Achilleid*), and Shackleton Bailey (2003, all works); however, in accordance with the international nature of the volume, the editors have not imposed standard texts upon the contributors. Where important, the editions used are indicated in the notes, as are the editions of other Greek and Latin texts. Consonantal "u" (uppercase "V") and "i" are used in all Latin quotations. Passages in Greek, Latin, and other languages are translated throughout; translations are by the authors unless otherwise indicated.

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PART 1

Introduction



Reading Statius

Carole E. Newlands, Kyle Gervais, and William J. Dominik

The cover illustration for this volume is a miniature from Burney 257, an early fifteenth-century illustrated French manuscript of the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*.¹ In a probable allusion to the sphragis of the *Thebaid*, which lists Domitian (*Caesar*, 12.814) and “Italian youth” (*Itala . . . iuuentus*, 815) among the poem’s readership, the painting shows Statius, crowned with the poet’s laurel, presenting the *Thebaid* in the form of a bound codex to a crowned and bearded figure while three medieval schoolboys sit in eager expectation. The painting shows the relationships between poet, ruler, and readers translated to a medieval context; it thus demonstrates the prestige of Statius as an ancient Roman poet, the enduring flexibility of his poetics, and the capability of his works to acquire new meanings over time through the continuing process of transmission and re-reading. *Brill’s Companion to Statius* is the latest expression of this ongoing process.

There is no ancient *vita* of Statius, and so, with the exception of Juvenal’s brief sketch of Statius’ public, popular recitation of the *Thebaid* and composition of a mime (7.82–7), we have to depend on Statius’ own poetic construction of his career, which largely derives from *Silvae* 5.3, his tribute to his father. Statius, who was born and raised in Naples, was the son of a highly successful Greek professional poet and *grammaticus*. At some point he moved to Rome, possibly during the reign of Vespasian (69–79 CE) when his father became teacher to the imperial family. Statius is the author of two epics, the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, and of a collection of experimental, epideictic poetry, the *Silvae*. The scope and date of the *De Bello Germanico*, surviving only in a fragment, is uncertain; it was most likely an early work, possibly about Domitian’s current military campaigns.² Statius has been wrongly regarded as a sycophant of Domitian; he was never awarded the first literary prize in the emperor’s Capitoline Games, a snub he deplures (*Silv.* 3.5.31–3), and he seems to have maintained his ties to the Bay of Naples throughout his life.

¹ The MS is now housed in the British Library and its images can be viewed online.

² See Courtney (1980) 195–200, (1993) 360.

Of all major ancient poets the reception of Statius has been particularly fraught. From the highpoint of his role as Dante's spiritual and moral guide in the *Purgatorio*, he had descended by the early twentieth century to the level of a second rank, superficial poet in the magisterial 1909 literary history of Butler, *Post-Augustan Poetry: From Seneca to Juvenal*, still available in paperback.³ The appearance of *Brill's Companion to Statius* a century later is a tribute to the rehabilitation of Statius that began in the late twentieth century thanks to a new generation of scholars well versed in literary theoretical criticism and thoroughly attuned to the new resources made available by the digital revolution. Among the themes that are explored in this volume are the social, cultural, and political issues surrounding Statius' poetry; his controversial aesthetic; the influence of his literary predecessors upon his poetry; and the scholarly and literary reception of his work in subsequent ages up to the present time. The volume offers new approaches to the poet's three major works—the *Thebaid*, the *Achilleid*, and the *Silvae*—as well as fresh insights into how his poetry has been read and interpreted over the ages.

The Experimental Poet

The novel and experimental nature of all Statius' poetry has meant that it was open to criticism from the start. At the end of the *Thebaid* Statius declares his poem's early success with both the emperor Domitian and students in Italian schools (*Theb.* 12.814–15), but he also alludes to a certain "envy" (*liuor*, 817) directed against his work. In the preface to *Silvae* 1, published shortly after the *Thebaid*, Statius mentions that he is still on tenterhooks about his epic:

quid enim [...] quoque auctoritate editionis onerari, quo adhuc pro
Thebaide mea, quamuis me reliquerit, timeo? sed et Culicem legimus
et Batrachomachiam etiam agnoscimus, nec quisquam est inlustrum
poetarum qui non aliquid operibus suis stilo remissiore praeluserit.

SILV. 1 PRAEF. 5–9

But why do I burden myself with publication at a time when I am still apprehensive about my *Thebaid*, though it has left me? But we read the *Culex* too and we acknowledge also the *Batrachomachia*;⁴ nor is there

3 Butler (1909) was reprinted as a paperback by Hard Press in 2006; recent paper and e-book reproductions of the original are available on amazon.com.

4 Works believed by the ancients to have been written by Vergil and Homer in their youth.

one of the illustrious poets who has not made a prelude to his major works with something in a more relaxed style.

Even as he presents himself proudly as an epic poet in line with Homer and Vergil, he expresses anxiety over the reception of his *Thebaid* with his readers; in the same preface he both apologizes for and defends the new improvisational style of the *Silvae*. Juvenal hints that at least the *Thebaid* met popular approval, with crowds flocking to hear a public recitation by Statius (7.82–7). But in the preface to book 4 of the *Silvae* published about two years later in 95 CE, Statius admits that his first collection of *Silvae* has received hostile criticism from some quarters:

quare ergo plura in quarto Siluarum quam in prioribus? ne se putent aliquid egisse, qui reprehenderunt, ut audio, quod hoc stili genus edissem.

SILV. 4 PRAEF. 24–6

Why then are there more poems in the fourth book of *Silvae* than in the previous books? So that those who have criticized me (as I hear) for publishing in this type of genre might not think they have achieved anything.

Statius is not specific about the nature of the criticism beyond fastening on the issue of propriety; as in the first preface with the reference to Homer's and Vergil's juvenilia, he argues that a poet should be allowed sometimes to play: *exerceri autem ioco non licet? "secreto" inquit* ("But am I not allowed to practice in fun? 'Do so privately,' [my critic] says," *Silv. 4 praef.* 31).⁵ It seems that the *Silvae* were not what some readers expected from the epic poet of Theban *nefas*. Even so, here the language of prohibition (*non licet*) and of secrecy (*secreto*) casts a political tinge upon the poet's playful experimentation with genre. Why the unnamed critic believes that play is a private, secret matter is not specified. Is it because play offends the decorum of the hexameter, which is the dominant meter of the *Silvae*? Or because play often entails verbal ambiguity that also can cause political offence? While Statius is tantalizingly vague here, his response to criticism, both feared and actual, of the *Thebaid* and the *Silvae* shows that he was not a poet to sink into a rut or to submit to cultural policing; his major corpus consists of three generically diverse, experimental works, with the last perhaps the boldest and most experimental of all. At the beginning of his *Achilleid* (1.1–19), Statius declares his intention to narrate the whole life of Achilles by filling in the gaps left by the great Homer and delivering an epic worthy both to succeed his *Thebaid* and precede a promised

5 See Coleman (1988) for various speculations on the nature of the objections to the *Silvae*.

epic on Domitian. But instead, whether by death or design, he gives us a playful epyllion on the farcical and romantic episode of Achilles at Scyros.

History has to some extent justified Statius' fears about the reputation of his poetry. The *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* enjoyed great success in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, which resulted in a sprawling manuscript tradition whose complexities are only now beginning to be appreciated.⁶ But the *Silvae*, which were lost during the Middle Ages, did not reappear until 1417 with Poggio's discovery of the poems in a manuscript that also contained the *Astronomica* of Manilius and the *Punica* of Silius Italicus; this manuscript was again lost and the copy that Poggio had made, on which the transmission of the *Silvae* has been dependent, was a poor one.⁷ Consequently the reception of the *Silvae* has suffered from corrupt and misunderstood readings. Furthermore, while the discovery of a new body of poetry by Statius occasioned initial excitement among humanists, it also ironically soon saw the start of the poet's decline in reputation.⁸ For with the dissemination of the *Silvae* the literary world was introduced to a different Statius from the one revered in the Middle Ages as a leading rhetorician from Toulouse.⁹ The medieval Statius was imagined as a familiar, acceptable figure to the scholarly elite of the Middle Ages: a teacher, scholar and a northern European—in other words, mostly like themselves.¹⁰ The new Statius was revealed not only to be the son of a Greek grammarian but also born and bred in Naples; furthermore, it was apparent in the *Silvae* that the emperor Domitian played a larger role in Statius' world than was realized from the epics. The publication of the *Silvae* in the fifteenth century changed Statius' relationship with his readers. Although there were some important exceptions such as Poliziano in regard to the perception of Statius,¹¹ he was

6 Thanks in large part to Anderson (2009) and Hall *et al.* (2007–2008).

7 On the fortunes of the *Silvae* in the fifteenth century and their overall textual tradition, see Reeve (1977) and (1983) 397–9 respectively.

8 On the notion of decline as a powerful trope of post-Augustan literature and rhetoric, see Dominik (1993a), (1997c), (2010c); Hinds (1998) 83–91.

9 The mistake originated with Suetonius, *De Rhetoribus* 12 and Jerome's translation of Eusebius' *Chronica*, which refer to an L. Statius Ursulus, a *rhetor* from Toulouse, and was thence widely believed to be our poet. See Anderson (2009) 3.2.

10 On the medieval Statius as represented in the *accessus* (introductions to his work in medieval manuscripts), see Anderson (2009); cf. Dominik (2005) 523–6, (2012b); Parkes, pp. 466–9 in this volume.

11 In 1480 Poliziano gave the first lectures on Statius' *Silvae*, though they were never published, and he wrote a collection of four poems entitled *Silvae*, which were loosely based upon Statius but owed more to other classical models such as Vergil. See Mengelkoch, pp. 562–71 and Parkes, pp. 473–4 in this volume.

often regarded as a stereotypical “soft” southerner and as a courtier; consequently a debate began over the perceived looseness and luxuriance of his style, a debate that culminated in scholarly circles in the seventeenth century with the polemics of Gronovius and in literary circles with Dryden’s polemics.¹² Moreover, in an early modern period increasingly hostile to autocrats, he came to be seen as a flatterer and as decadent like his emperor and the age.¹³

The powerful intellect and style of Tacitus along with the vindictive eloquence of Pliny skewered the reputation of Domitian for centuries. The past thirty years, however, have seen significant attempts by historians to reassess Domitian’s reign.¹⁴ But much about his character and reign remain a mystery. For instance, was he a great general? Or are his military representations in poetry and art grossly distorted by imperial propaganda? Moreover, it is difficult to find artistic images of Domitian on account of the *damnatio memoriae* that took place after his death. Among the finest products of Flavian art are the Cancellaria reliefs, in which Domitian’s features have been recut to resemble those of Nerva—a symbol of the faintness of his imprint on the actual visual record.¹⁵

Statius Redeemed

Just as it is hard to *see* Domitian, so it is hard to understand him and his rule since they are buried under centuries of hostile criticism. The reception of Statius sometimes has been closely tied with that of his emperor. The reassessment of Statius in the English-speaking world was heralded by Kenney’s sensitive and positive appraisal in the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* published in 1982.¹⁶ A crucial and dramatic change in the understanding of Statius took place during the subsequent short period of four years. Alex Hardie’s *Statius and*

12 See Anderson (2009) 3.123; Mengelkoch, pp. 571–78 in this volume.

13 This critical trend reached its nadir with Butler’s (1909) characterization of Statius as a “bootlicker.”

14 Notably, e.g., Jones (1992); Flower (2006).

15 The cover illustration for the volume (a miniature from an early fifteenth-century manuscript of Statius) shows the emperor’s image obscured in a less malicious way, what we may call *mutatio memoriae*: Statius and Domitian wear medieval garb to update the emperor-poet relationship for the Middle Ages. See above, p. 3.

16 Kenney (1982) 558–80. The reassessment of Statius has occurred at various times in other scholarly traditions, for example, in the German-speaking community when Cancik (1965) dramatically transformed scholars’ understanding and appreciation of Statius’ lyric art and aesthetics.

the Silvae: Poets, Patrons and Epideixis in the Graeco-Roman World represented a bold move away from the stereotype of Statius' "Greekness" as decadence.¹⁷ Rather, it showed the importance of Statius' engagement with the complex tradition of Hellenistic epideictic poetry to which he was exposed both as a scion of Naples, the center of Greek culture in Italy, and as the son of a Greek professional poet and highly skilled teacher. Hardie argued that the *Silvae* were sophisticated, unique Roman poems composed within a bicultural milieu and honed by a complex interaction with both Hellenistic and Augustan poetics. There followed three groundbreaking articles by Ahl that applied the ancient rhetorical techniques of "safe criticism" to the *Silvae* and *Thebaid*. Ahl argued that *Silvae* 1.1, which describes Domitian's equestrian statue, used "figured speech" subtly to mock imperial pretensions, while he viewed the *Thebaid*'s condemnation of the mythological civil war at Thebes as an implicit criticism of the Flavians, who were victors in the recent historical civil war at Rome.¹⁸ Hardie and Ahl helped to do much in the Anglophone world to generate the field of Flavian studies, which over the past three decades has shown such rich and productive advances in our understanding of the politics, culture, and the literature of this key period of Roman imperial history.

Not everyone agreed with Ahl's deconstruction of Statius' poetry, of course, or with his key concept of "figured speech," which Statius' contemporary Quintilian discussed in rather elusive terms (*Inst.* 9.2.65–8). But the horse was now out of the starting gate and fresh criticism of all of Statius' works was underway.¹⁹ Among Greek tragic poets Thebes was widely regarded as a byword for a dysfunctional society and as the threatening *alter ego* of democratic Athens, as Zeitlin had emphasized.²⁰ Following in Ahl's and Zeitlin's footsteps, other scholars began to apply similar insights to imperial Rome, with the German scholar Benker first arguing for the political allusiveness of the *Achilleid* and then with Anglophone scholars McGuire, Dominik, and Henderson exploring the relevance of the *Thebaid* to contemporary Rome.²¹

17 A. Hardie (1983).

18 Ahl (1984a), (1984b), and (1986).

19 For overviews of recent scholarship on Statius' *Thebaid*, see Dominik (1996b); Coleman (2003b) 9–24, 29–37; for recent scholarship on the *Achilleid* and *Silvae*, see Coleman (2003b) 9–10, 24–37 and (2003a) 11–21 respectively. For surveys of recent scholarship on all three works, see Fantham and Faurey (2011).

20 Zeitlin (1986). Already in 1953 the German scholar Erich Burck had drawn attention to some of the similarities between Statius' Thebes and Tacitus' imperial Rome, but his article had little immediate effect on English-speaking scholars; cf. Dominik (1996b) 704.

21 Benker (1987); McGuire (1989) and (1997); Dominik (1990), (1994b), and (2005) 522–4; Henderson (1991), (1993), and (1998b) 212–52. As noted by Dominik (2005) 525, possible

For Benker, McGuire, and Dominik the relevance centered on strong, if covert, criticism of the ruling regime; for Henderson contemporary resonances were less direct. Subsequent scholars have elaborated on both approaches: Criado interpreted the *Thebaid*'s divine apparatus as a subversion of its Homeric and Vergilian predecessors that reflects poorly on the Flavian dynasty; Ganiban and McNelis both found ideological consequences to Statius' literary engagement with earlier poets, especially Vergil and Callimachus; Bessone examined the figure of Theseus and the language of power in the *Thebaid* in relation to Greek and Roman political thought; and Braund, who argued for the connection between Thebes and Rome, saw it as an expression of an enduring Roman fear of civic collapse.²² A second strand of interpretation, most fully explored by the French scholars Ripoll, Franchet d'Espèrey, and Delarue, has found in the *Thebaid* not pessimism about Statius' contemporary world but optimism, with the epic's conclusion advancing *humanitas* as a redeeming ideal for Flavian Rome.²³ The debate continues, as evidenced by several chapters in this volume.²⁴

Another striking shift in critical reception occurred with the *Achilleid*. In the Middle Ages it was a popular school text often bound with the moralizing, so-called *Distichs of Cato*. But Butler dismissed the *Achilleid* in only one paragraph by concluding that "there is nothing to make us regret that the poet died before its completion."²⁵ Butler's approach to post-Augustan literature was informed by a notion of decline covertly underpinned by gender bias. A century later Heslin's *The Transvestite Achilles: Gender and Genre in Statius' Achilleid* has underscored how much gender theory can alter and enrich our appreciation of Statius' second epic and indeed alert us to the gendered play in much of his poetry.²⁶ For instance, the work of Dietrich, Masterson, Lovatt, Bessone, and Augoustakis has illuminated the role of gender in the *Thebaid*;²⁷ in this volume

allusions in the *Achilleid* to the contemporary political situation at Rome are not as easy to establish as they are for the *Thebaid*.

22 Criado (2000); Ganiban (2007); McNelis (2007); Bessone (2011); Braund (2006). More generally the study of Bartsch (1994) on the theatricality of imperial power has proven highly influential upon scholars.

23 Ripoll (1998a); Franchet d'Espèrey (1999); Delarue (2000).

24 Ahl, pp. 240–65; Dominik, pp. 266–90; Criado, pp. 291–306.

25 Butler (1909) 172.

26 Heslin (2005). See also Moul (2012) for a sophisticated, gendered and political reading of a passage not discussed by Heslin, the mustering of the troops at Aulis (*Achil.* 1.447–559).

27 Dietrich (1999); Masterson (2005); Lovatt (2006); Bessone (2010), (2011) 200–24; Augoustakis (2010b) 30–91.

Dietrich and Micozzi further explore the depiction of women in the *Thebaid*, while McNelis offers a gendered reading of the similes of the *Achilleid*.²⁸

Our view of Statius' *Silvae* has also changed substantially since Hardie demonstrated the sophisticated Hellenistic literary and cultural background of this poet from Naples.²⁹ Key articles by Rosati have demonstrated the poet's skilled negotiation with his times as well as with literary tradition. He has argued, for instance, that the *Silvae* are the inheritors of the Roman elegiac tradition in that Statius' *Silvae* bring decorum to elegiac themes: Statius' personified Elegia props up her uneven foot in order to walk in hexameter (*Silv.* 1.2.8–9)!³⁰ He also has argued that the lavish language of Statius' encomia in the *Silvae* aestheticizes imperial authority and makes it appear benign.³¹ Thus Statius asserts the cultural authority of his own poetry as a potential instrument of the legitimization of autocratic power in Rome. In addition to his valuable work on patronage,³² Nauta has written persuasively on the new use of the *recusatio* in Statius' poetry, including the *Silvae*, showing its innovative use not as a refusal of epic per se but as refusal of historical epic on Domitian's military achievements.³³ Garthwaite has interpreted some poems of the *Silvae* as reflecting thinly veiled criticism of Domitian.³⁴ Newlands has drawn attention to the composition of the *Silvae* in the difficult latter years of Domitian's reign.³⁵ Rather than adopting a subversive reading of these poems, she argued that devices such as simile, metaphor, and hyperbole create "faultlines" in the text that open these poems up to multiple readings. Her study also emphasized the generic importance of the villa poems as freestanding *ekphraseis*. Though the description of luxurious houses and works of art reflects the elite culture of the time, Statius boldly updates the moral values embedded in Horace's and Vergil's rural poetry by endorsing wealth when it is wisely used. Augoustakis and Newlands have provided a range of essays on the *Silvae* that focus chiefly on the private poems and their development of a new language of friendship and kinship reflective of the deep changes in Flavian society in terms of class, wealth, and status.³⁶ Lately Newlands has argued that Statius' works should be

28 Dietrich, pp. 307–21; Micozzi, pp. 325–42; McNelis, pp. 189–204.

29 A. Hardie (1983).

30 Rosati (1999). See now too Merli (2013), who notes the close thematic links between Ovid's exile poetry and the *Silvae*.

31 Rosati (2006).

32 Nauta (2002).

33 Nauta (2008).

34 Garthwaite (1984), (1989).

35 Newlands (2002).

36 Augoustakis and Newlands (2007).

read together as a coherent project, with each informing the other in meaning and reflecting their historical and cultural context.³⁷

Such sociological approaches have also been applied to Statius' entire corpus by various scholars, many of whom continue their work in this volume. Nauta and Rühl have explored the changing nature of literary patronage under Domitian through the lens of Statius and Martial.³⁸ Bernstein has demonstrated how changing models of kin relationships in Flavian society are reflected in Statius' intense interest in flexible and unconventional family structures.³⁹ Coffee has given social and political meaning to the familiar idea of a poetics of excess by applying it to the epic's pattern of excessive consumption and destructive waste caused by war.⁴⁰

The comparative approach has become increasingly a *modus operandi* for critics of Statius' poetry, as evidenced not only in this volume but also in other recent and ongoing work. Dominik, for example, has pursued a comparative sociological approach by undertaking a broadly conceived comparison of Statius' and Martial's representations of contemporary social life and values in the *Silvae* and *Epigrams* respectively.⁴¹ Bernstein has examined Statius' poetry alongside two other Flavian epicists, Valerius Flaccus and Silius Italicus, as commentaries or reflections upon contemporary developments in the social, political, and religious domains.⁴² Vout has focused upon sexuality and eroticism and Fantham has explored aspects of authorial rhetoric and invective in both Statius and Lucan.⁴³ Gervais, moving further afield, has compared the visuality of violence in the *Thebaid* and the films of Quentin Tarantino.⁴⁴

The largest body of modern scholarship on Statius' poetry concerns its place in the literary tradition, that is, its intertextual relationships with previous and contemporary literature. This area of investigation continues to hold considerable interest for scholars of Statius in this volume, as discussed below, and elsewhere.⁴⁵ In the Anglophone world this scholarship began with the work of Gordon Williams and especially Denis Feeney and Philip Hardie, who along with an increasing number of other scholars rejected the traditional

37 Newlands (2012).

38 Nauta (2002); Rühl (2006) and pp. 91–105 in this volume.

39 Bernstein (2005), (2008), and pp. 139–54 in this volume.

40 Coffee (2006), (2009b) 185–271, and pp. 106–22 in this volume.

41 Dominik (forthcoming).

42 Bernstein (forthcoming).

43 Vout (forthcoming); Fantham (forthcoming).

44 Gervais (2013). Other work on visual aspects of Statius' poetry includes Lovatt (2013); Haynes (forthcoming); Baertschi (forthcoming); and Chinn, pp. 173–88 in this volume.

45 E.g., Parkes (forthcoming).

characterization of Statius as a slavish imitator of Vergil.⁴⁶ Williams advanced instead a Bloomian theory of Statius' "defensive imitation" of Vergil; Hardie offered an equally Bloomian, but more critically invigorating theory of "creative imitation"; Feeney, "baffled by the condescension which smothers appreciation of this gorgeous poem [the *Thebaid*],"⁴⁷ gave a brief but forceful demonstration of Statius' original response to his literary inheritance. Modern scholars owe much to these studies but have increasingly argued that the intertextuality of Statius' poetry is more than a manifestation of his anxiety about his belated position in Latin literature and is in fact the most sophisticated and compelling way he makes meaning in his poems.⁴⁸ Furthermore, scholars of Statian intertextuality have fully embraced the tools of the digital revolution⁴⁹ to show that Statius' intertextual engagement with Vergil is not only more pervasive and important than previously imagined but also only the beginning of the story: as evidenced by the chapters in Section VI of this volume, Statius' poetry makes use of a wide variety of Greek and Roman epic, tragedy, elegy, and epigram. Indeed, the revolution in Statian studies opened the gateway to fresh reevaluations of the other major Flavian writers.

Statius' poetry in turn was used by a wide variety of successors from late antiquity to the present, as has long been recognized. In fact, much of the earliest appreciation of Statius in the modern era came not from Classicists but from Medievalists (e.g., C. S. Lewis in his *Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*), who approached Statius not as a debased heir of Vergil but as an illustrious progenitor of Dante, Chaucer, Boccaccio, and others. The nine chapters on Statius' successors in Section VII, two written by professors of English but the rest by Classical scholars, demonstrate yet again that Classicists have now begun to appreciate what other fields have long recognized: Statius is a central author in the canon of Western literature whose critical dismissal was an aberration and whose redemption was inevitable.

This literary critical research has been helped by a resurgence in philological work on Statius' poems. In particular, Courtney's Oxford text of the *Silvae* and Shackleton Bailey's Loeb editions of Statius' works have made the poet

46 G. W. Williams (1986); Feeney (1991) 337–91; Hardie (1993).

47 G. W. Williams (1986); Hardie (1993); Feeney (1991) 337.

48 Notable examples of this approach are a *Festschrift* chapter by Dominik (2003); monographs by Lovatt (2005), Ganiban (2007), McNelis (2007), and Newlands (2012); and commentaries by Micozzi (2007b) and Parkes (2012).

49 Including *Diogenes* (developed by Peter Heslin), a tool for searching and browsing ancient texts, and the *Tesserae Project* (led by Neil Coffee), a set of tools for discovering text reuse in Greek and Latin literature.

much more accessible to the reader.⁵⁰ We also now have a French edition with critical commentary of the *Silvae* by Liberman⁵¹ and an ambitious three-volume edition of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* with translation by Hall, Ritchie, and Edwards,⁵² whose reevaluation of the manuscript tradition and bold editorial approach will stimulate further interest in the texts of the epics.⁵³ In the past three decades commentaries have been produced on five of the *Thebaid*'s twelve books,⁵⁴ four of the five books of *Silvae*,⁵⁵ and all of the *Achilleid*,⁵⁶ commentaries on the *Achilleid* and three more books of the *Thebaid* are under way by contributors to this volume.⁵⁷ Translations too have made Statius more visible: in addition to recent prose translations in various languages,⁵⁸ we have verse translations in English,⁵⁹ German,⁶⁰ and French.⁶¹

Current Trends and New Directions

What follows is a discussion of the contents of *Brill's Companion to Statius*. In this volume we have attempted to provide for our readers both an overview

-
- 50 Courtney (1992); Shackleton Bailey (2003).
 51 Liberman (2010).
 52 Hall *et al.* (2007–2008). Their work on the manuscripts of Statius is much indebted to Anderson (2009).
 53 Already Parkes (2012) and Gervais (2015a) and (forthcoming) engage with their work.
 54 Book 4 by Parkes (2012), 4.1–344 by Steiniger (2005) and Micozzi (2007b), 6.238–549 by Pavan (2009), 7 by Smolenaars (1994), 9 by Dewar (1991), 12 by Pollmann (2004), 12.312–463 by Hoffmann (1999).
 55 Book 2 by van Dam (1984) and Newlands (2011b), 3 by Laguna (1992), 4 by Coleman (1988), 5 by Gibson (2006).
 56 Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) and Nuzzo (2012) cover the entire work; Uccellini (2012) covers *Achil.* 1.1–396. The commentary on the entire work by Dilke (1954) was reprinted in 2005 (Bristol) with a new introduction by Robert Cowan.
 57 *Achilleid* by Charles McNelis; *Thebaid* 2 by Kyle Gervais, 3 by Valéry Berlincourt, 8 by Antony Augoustakis.
 58 English: Shackleton Bailey (2003); Ritchie, Hall, and Edwards in Hall *et al.* (2007) 2. French: Lesueur (1990–1994). German: Wißmüller (1990); Schönberger (1998). Italian: Rosati (1994b); L. Canali in Canali and Pellegrini (2000). Spanish: Rodríguez (1995). Catalan: Barreda Edo (2010). Translations also accompany commentaries in Coleman (1988); Dewar (1991); Laguna (1992); Gibson (2006); Nuzzo (2012); Parkes (2012).
 59 *Thebaid*: Melville (1992); Ross (2004); Joyce (2008). *Silvae*: Nagle (2004); Howell and Sheperd (2007). *Achilleid*: Slavitt (1997).
 60 Rupprecht (2000) translates the *Thebaid*.
 61 Soubiran translates the *Achilleid* in Ripoll and Soubiran (2008).

of present trends in research and a stimulus to future exploration of Statius, his times, and his reception. Although a *Companion* volume of this kind aims to cover important aspects of an author's work, it cannot hope to be comprehensive; such gaps that exist we hope others will now be able to address. Those who work in Flavian poetry tend to form a cohesive group, and recently there have been many fine instances of collaborative research, which has been stimulated by the online Flavian network run by Helen Lovatt.⁶² The present volume is the most ambitious attempt yet to bring together expert scholars in order to provide a fresh appreciation of this poet and his right to a commanding place in the Latin literary canon. For too long Statius has been cast as an epigonal, deeply imitative poet, particularly of Vergil's *Aeneid*.⁶³ *Brill's Companion to Statius* shows Statius' boldness in rewriting the heroic code, his originality in charting new poetic themes and genres, and his virtuosic reshaping of multiple literary sources. This volume shows his importance as a source for the remote, authoritarian rule of Domitian and for the new elite culture of luxury and leisure in a key period of Roman history when empire finally assumed the social and political structure it would preserve for at least two more centuries. In short, the volume is an introduction to and a celebration of the innovative, highly nuanced poetry of this major Roman author.

Beginnings

We begin the main part of our volume with discussions of the beginnings of each of Statius' works (Section II). **Sara Myers** (Chapter 2) offers close readings of the proem to the *Thebaid* and of invocations of the Muses elsewhere in the epic.⁶⁴ These passages emerge as densely intertextual meditations on belatedness, struggles for authority (represented by conflicting sources of inspiration), and the immensity of the epic's mythological theme. Myers shows how Statius in the *Silvae* not only chooses various sources of inspiration to suit his different subjects and patrons but also rejects sources associated with his epic poetry as he defines his novel poetics of Callimachean refinement mixed with epic/encomiastic grandeur. Callimachean tensions are also **Gianpiero Rosati's** (Chapter 3) concern in his examination of the epistolary prefaces of the *Silvae*, where he highlights the negotiation between the careful

62 <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/Fen/index.aspx>.

63 This misconception was substantially redressed by Ganiban (2007). It is a testament to the shift in recent Statian scholarship that there was no room among the eight chapters on Statius' predecessors and contemporaries in this volume for a chapter dedicated to the *Aeneid* (though several chapters throughout the volume touch upon Vergil's epic).

64 Myers, pp. 31–53.

construction (Callimachean *labor limae*) expected of a proven epic poet by his educated readers and the improvisatory facility (expressed with the imagery of “warmth” and “fluidity”) expected by his patrons/addressees and demanded by the occasional nature of his poems.⁶⁵ Rosati elucidates this tension with reference to Horace, Lucilius, and Ovid, then turns to Petronius and Martial to describe a post-Augustan “culture of the impromptu” that influences Statius’ and Martial’s partial rejection of Callimachean poetics; unlike Martial, Statius does not also reject the “high” culture embraced by his elite patrons. In his discussion of the *Achilleid* **Randall Ganiban** (Chapter 4) shares Rosati’s interest in generic tension and focuses on what Myers calls the “poetics of opening.”⁶⁶ He examines several attempts by Thetis to set the poem in motion—or more precisely, to turn the course of the poem away from the genre of martial epic in an attempt to protect her son Achilles. Ganiban shows how Thetis’ efforts call up Homeric, Vergilian, Catullan, and Ovidian models but fail each time; the goddess is ultimately bested by Ulysses, an epic-Ovidian hybrid who sets Achilles and the poem on their martial course.

Social and Cultural Matters

The next four chapters offer sociological examinations of Statius’ works (Section III). At issue are interpersonal relationships, wealth, social distinction, and different opportunities for social commentary offered by Statius’ epic and occasional poetry. **Meike Rühl** (Chapter 5), who offers a second comparison of the *Silvae* and Martial’s *Epigrams* (following Rosati, Chapter 3), examines how each poet provides their addressees a means of distinguishing themselves from their peers under the new social conditions of the Flavian period, which favored material, cultural, and intellectual distinction.⁶⁷ Drawing on cultural semiotics, Rühl compares Martial’s epigrams addressed to Flaccus with Statius’ poems addressed to Atedius Melior: in both cases what distinguishes the patron is his friendship with the poet that becomes an integral and prestigious part of his work. **Neil Coffee** (Chapter 6) continues the investigation into Statius’ relationships with his patrons; he looks again to Martial and to the younger Seneca, who highlight problems with gift-giving, an important facet of Roman interpersonal relationships.⁶⁸ The practice had become drained of pleasure and used instead solely for personal gain to trap the recipient in a position of obligation. Statius reflects this Roman reality in the mythological

65 Rosati, pp. 54–72.

66 Ganiban, pp. 73–87.

67 Rühl, pp. 91–105.

68 Coffee, pp. 106–22.

setting of the *Thebaid*, particularly in the story of Harmonia's necklace. But in the *Silvae* Statius offers his patrons a better way by suggesting that aesthetic enjoyment can serve as a stepping-stone toward restoration of the important affective element in elite gift exchange.

Gift exchange involves larger questions of the perception of wealth. **Bruce Gibson** (Chapter 7) shows how Statius addresses this problematic aspect of elite culture in his encomia of patrons: throughout the *Silvae* Statius draws on traditional negative stereotypes of wealth to show how his rich addressees break those stereotypes.⁶⁹ Autobiographical passages in the *Silvae* suggest that Statius, who was much poorer than his patrons, was anxious to avoid the appearance of greed that might be associated with a professional poet. Like Coffee (Chapter 6), Gibson turns to the *Thebaid* to show Statius presenting a much darker picture by evoking traditional associations of wealth with immorality. There are complexities, however, typical of the disjunctive world of the *Thebaid*, especially since Thebes is (apparently) poor but immoral and Argos rich but (apparently) moral.

Finally, the importance of the patron-client relationships examined throughout this section is part of a broader trend in Flavian society involving the increased valuation of elective relationships (marriage, fosterage, and friendship) over inherited blood relationships (filial and fraternal). **Neil Bernstein** (Chapter 8) examines this trend as reflected in all of Statius' poems by combining a sociological approach with intertextual analysis to show that the troubled families of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* distinguish these works from their more positive Vergilian and Homeric models, while the *Silvae* contrast with the earlier Roman encomiastic tradition in attributing comparatively less importance to genealogical descent than to other forms of distinction.⁷⁰

Transgressive Poetics: The Achilleid

Ganiban's study (Chapter 4) of generic ambiguity in the *Achilleid* anticipates the three examinations of Statius' ambiguous epic in Section IV. The first begins with the *Achilleid*'s proem, which both asserts and denies the poem's epic status. **Peter Davis** (Chapter 9) sets this opening conflict in a larger poetics of paradox that manifests itself throughout the poem.⁷¹ Thus Chiron is both martial and pacifist, part-man and part-horse. An epic storm to start the poem is first promised and then denied (which Ganiban in his chapter reads

69 Gibson, pp. 123–38.

70 Bernstein, pp. 139–54.

71 Davis, pp. 157–72.

as one of Thetis' failures). This generic ambiguity complements the particular androgynous ambiguity of Achilles, who is modeled on figures from both epic and Callimachean/erotic genres.

The next two chapters further explore ambiguous facets of the *Achilleid*'s central figure. For **Christopher Chinn** (Chapter 10) Achilles' ambiguity is expressed with visual language that also has metapoetic force: as Achilles' appearance is liminal (between boy and man, female and male, lover and warrior), so is the poem torn between epic and elegiac/occasional/pastoral poetry.⁷² Focusing on repeated descriptions of Achilles' blush, Chinn examines intertextual links to pastoral, elegiac, and epic poetry and demonstrates again the generic complexity of the *Achilleid*; he shows also how these links reinforce Statius' metapoetic use of visual language. Chinn ends with a glance at two of Statius' successors, Dracontius and Philostratus, who take up his concerns with genre and metapoetics. For **Charles McNelis** (Chapter 11) Achilles' ambiguity may be found in the epic's similes, whose intertextuality underscores the young transvestite's confused gender—biologically male but culturally constructed as female.⁷³ Elaborating on Davis and Chinn, McNelis not only discusses the Vergilian frame for a pair of similes that compare Achilles and Deidamia to Apollo and Diana but also incorporates two more similes that offer Diana and the young Castor as further models for the androgynous, ephebic Achilles. He then turns to a Callimachean intertext that advances Athena as an ideal model for Achilles—not Athena the warrior goddess who supports and glories in the grown Achilles' triumphs in the *Iliad*, but Athena the ambiguous figure who combines masculine, martial excellence with sensual feminine qualities.

Conflict, Power, and Death in the Thebaid

Six chapters focused specifically on the *Thebaid* take as their inspiration three themes central to Statius' epic of dynastic struggle and internecine war: conflict, power, and death (Section v). A pair of chapters begins by exploring the martial and familial conflicts at the heart of the *Thebaid*. **Rhiannon Ash** (Chapter 12) reveals Statius' creative engagement with his literary heritage and cultural milieu in the epic's scenes of battle.⁷⁴ She identifies various strategies that created battle narratives compelling to a contemporary audience well versed in both epic and historiographical warfare: delay and transformation of expected battle, paradox, amazement, and a bold style. Ash then examines resonances between the Theban war and the historical civil wars of

⁷² Chinn, pp. 173–88.

⁷³ McNelis, pp. 189–204.

⁷⁴ Ash, pp. 207–20.

69 CE (as recorded by Tacitus): these had more relevance and emotional power for Statius and his contemporaries than the imperial campaigns he rejects as a poetic theme in the *Thebaid's* proem. **Kyle Gervais** (Chapter 13) focuses Bernstein's overview (Chapter 8) of kinship in Statius onto parent-child relationships in the *Thebaid*.⁷⁵ Taking an intertextual and intratextual approach to the inset narratives of Adrastus and Hypsipyle in books 1 and 5, he uncovers sustained examinations of parent-child conflict. These reflect a broader, metapoetic concern (here Gervais echoes the metapoetic approaches to the *Achilleid* by Ganiban, Davis, and Chinn): an analysis of the rich intertextuality in the epilogue of the *Thebaid* reveals that Statius figures the poem as his child, which he sends away into an uncertain future. This gesture of paternal worry conflicts with a "filicidal voice" running through the poem that desires the death of the *Thebaid*.

There follows a pair of chapters on power and politics in the *Thebaid*, which amplify the dark undercurrents examined by Gervais. **Frederick Ahl** (Chapter 14), whose work on Statius helped to inaugurate the modern Statian renaissance, casts a wide net over the poems of Statius, Vergil, Ovid, Seneca, Homer, and Sophocles to argue that unexamined academic ideologies have prevented scholars from fully exploring the criticisms of power that lie hidden in these works.⁷⁶ **William Dominik** (Chapter 15) discusses Statian criticisms of power to be found in the *Thebaid's* similes and maintains that the most important function of the similes is the elucidation of the epic's main themes of the abuse of power on the supernatural and monarchical levels and the consequential suffering of its victims.⁷⁷ Dominik focuses upon a number of similes concerning Jupiter and Theseus that have been the subject of recent debate among scholars and explains how they and other similes reinforce these themes. According to Dominik, the main stimulus of the human action of the *Thebaid* is the malevolent influence of the higher powers, especially Jupiter. His thematic reading of the similes demonstrates how they are often used to underscore this critical role of the gods by showing the destruction caused by those in power and the suffering endured by the powerless as the result of forces beyond their control.

Cecilia Criado (Chapter 16) then examines the character of Theseus (following Dominik, Chapter 15), who has been central to the debate over the portrayal of power in the *Thebaid*.⁷⁸ Situating her work in not only the history

75 Gervais, pp. 221–39.

76 Ahl, pp. 240–65.

77 Dominik, pp. 266–90.

78 Criado, pp. 291–306.

of “optimistic” and “pessimistic” readings but also analyses of Athens, Thebes, and Rome in terms of “otherness” and “sameness,” she argues that unlike the political ambiguities of the Athenian government in Euripides’ *Supplices*, Theseus’ rule of Athens in the *Thebaid* is clearly an *imperium*—the same as in Statius’ Thebes and Domitian’s Rome. Despite initial complexities, after book 1 Statius accepts this system as the only one possible. Criado argues, however, that the ambiguous and warlike aspects of Theseus’ character are not a criticism of contemporary politics but instead reflect the (inherently ambiguous) Greek and Roman ideology of war, which does not allow pacifism. Finally, **Jessica Dietrich** (Chapter 17) examines Jocasta, another figure important for sociopolitical readings of the *Thebaid*, whose contradictory treatments in the literary tradition allow her to be read as still among the living but also one of the dead, thus illustrating a particular Flavian ambivalence towards its relationship with the literary and political past.⁷⁹ Echoing Davis’ and Ganiban’s approaches to Achilles and Thetis in the *Achilleid*, Dietrich explores the many intertextual models—in Greek and Roman epic, tragedy, and historiography—for Jocasta in the *Thebaid* and also highlights Jocasta’s intratextual links with the ghost of her husband Laius. The complexity of Jocasta exemplifies Statius’ innovative aesthetics in the *Thebaid*, in which unstable physical and literary boundaries arguably mirror the political and social disintegration of Statius’ times.

Predecessors and Contemporaries

Laura Micozzi (Chapter 18) opens the study of Statius’ relationship with his predecessors (Section VI) by emphasizing his agonistic, all-encompassing, and self-reflexive approach to his literary past.⁸⁰ Statius boldly acknowledges his belatedness in the epic tradition by turning repetition, weariness, crowdedness, and decline into central creative tropes of the *Thebaid*, thereby challenging the epic past while also creating a continuum with it. Micozzi elaborates on three reflexive allusive practices: creating characters with “intertextual memory,” omitting or cutting short expected epic clichés, and continuing scenes from predecessors’ works. She touches on the engagement of Statius’ epics with Homer, Sophocles, Catullus, Lucretius, Vergil, Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, the wider mythographic tradition, and especially Ovid, whose own poetry provides precedents for several of Statius’ allusive strategies. These strategies create in the *Thebaid* a poetics of “intertextual irony,” which tempers the pathos of the work and fosters a self-confidence that claims a place of pride for Statius in epic tradition.

79 Dietrich, pp. 307–21.

80 Micozzi, pp. 325–42.

The next two chapters deal with intertexts for the *Thebaid* less often studied than others. First **Agis Marinis** (Chapter 19) examines the epic's relationship with Greek tragedy (following Criado, Chapter 16) in order to offer fresh perspectives on problems such as the issue of sameness and alterity.⁸¹ With reference to Aeschylus' *Septem Contra Thebas* and Euripides' *Phoenissae*, Marinis discusses the portrayal of the Argive leaders, the characterization of Polynices and Eteocles, and the causes of their conflict. Links to both tragedians are pervasive, with Aeschylus in particular shaping the careful presentation of the Argive leaders in the catalogue of *Thebaid* 4 and the gradual process of mutual identification between the brothers; the emphasis on the human (alongside the divine) causation of the conflict is distinctly Euripidean. Next **Victoria Pagán** (Chapter 20) identifies an unnoticed allusion to Vergil's *Georgics* in the proem of the *Thebaid* that hinges on the Dacians and the Hister River.⁸² She fully explores the significance of these two images by tracing their development through Ennius, Hostius, Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan as symbols of civil war, imperial military campaigns, and exile. These political considerations color the passage in the *Georgics*, which is emblematic of Vergil's refusal in this work to represent contemporary history and its violent horrors. Statius' allusion to Vergil's poem is thus programmatic since the *Thebaid*, whose mythological subject has undeniable political relevance, relates precisely what the *Georgics* refuse to narrate.

Two chapters examine the *Thebaid*'s Neronian predecessors. For **Antony Augoustakis** (Chapter 21), what the *Thebaid* narrates is enduring, inescapable *nefas*, and allusions to Senecan tragedy underscore this tragic vision.⁸³ Comparing scenes of ritual in Seneca's *Oedipus* and *Thyestes*, Augoustakis offers close readings of Tiresias' necromancy, Tydeus' cannibalism, and Creon's death. The Statian Tiresias displays intertextual memory of his portrayal in *Oedipus*. Tydeus combines (through a previously unnoticed allusion to *Thyestes*) the negative traits of both the cannibalistic Thyestes and the murderous Atreus, thus denying in the process any escape from the epic's *nefas* by means of *katharsis*. This denial of *katharsis* extends to the defeat of Creon at the end of the poem, which again looks to Seneca's *Oedipus*, only to cut off any possibility of closure or redemption. In the next discussion **Paul Roche** (Chapter 22) echoes Pagán (Chapter 20) in insisting that the *Aeneid* is far from the only Roman intertext for Statius' epic: Lucan is an important predecessor,

81 Marinis, pp. 343–61.

82 Pagán, pp. 362–76.

83 Augoustakis, pp. 377–92.

whose poem informs various aspects of the *Thebaid*.⁸⁴ Statius models characters both major (Tydeus, Eteocles, Polynices, and others) and minor (Ide) on a shifting array of Lucanian figures (Caesar, Pompey, Scaeva, Arruns, Erictho). He engages with Lucan's examinations of power and those who wield it. And he looks to Lucan in his portrayal of war's buildup, battles, climax, and aftermath by paying particular attention (as Ash in Chapter 12 notes) to paradox. For Roche, Statius' relationship with Lucan is agonistic (following Micozzi, Chapter 18) and his *Thebaid* a poetic attempt to triumph over and even subsume Lucan's epic. Statius thus walks self-consciously in the footsteps of Lucan as well as Vergil.

In the first of three chapters on Statius' Flavian contemporaries, **Helen Lovatt** (Chapter 23) offers the Argonautic epics of Apollonius Rhodius and especially Valerius Flaccus as further alternative intertexts for Statius' ostensibly Vergilian epic by examining a pair of similes in *Thebaid* 8 that refer to the Argonautic myth.⁸⁵ Considering the intertextuality of each simile in turn, she eschews traditional questions of relative dating and biography and instead ranges widely across several themes and poetic techniques of interest to contemporary Statian scholarship: disrupted succession, delay, reversal, liminality, metapoetics, and multiple allusions. Looking at the similes together, Lovatt broadens her discussion to examine issues of poetic authority, rivalry, and succession, beginnings, endings, and Statius' two voices split between lament and relish for war. **François Ripoll** (Chapter 24) takes a different approach by examining points of contact with Silius Italicus in all three of Statius' works; he focuses on the interrelated problems of the poets' personal relationship with one another, the relative dating of their poems, and the nature of their literary borrowings.⁸⁶ Ripoll's broad survey confirms the conventional datings of the poems and the picture of an amicable but distant relationship between the poets, which emerges in periodic allusive homages throughout their works. Giving particular attention to the *Achilleid*, Ripoll argues that here Statius reads Silius' epic as "hyper-Iliadic" and useful for expressing "Homeric" ideas in other terms. He concludes by suggesting that a cluster of allusions to Statius' epics in *Punica* 16 functions as an emphatic homage to a recently deceased Statius. Finally, **Luke Roman** (Chapter 25) joins Lovatt (Chapter 23) in rejecting the traditional biographical approach to Statius' relationships with his fellow Flavian poets and instead examines the ideology of poetic self-representation in the

84 Roche, pp. 393–407.

85 Lovatt, pp. 408–24.

86 Ripoll, pp. 425–43.

Silvae and Martial's *Epigrams*.⁸⁷ Roman describes the figure of the client poet and ludic author of Catullan *nugae* as having been created as an alternative to the clichéd and obsolete Augustan *uates*. This new poetics entailed inherent tensions: both Statius and Martial insist on the heterogeneity of their occasional poems even as they unify them by publication (an issue examined from a different perspective by Rosati, Chapter 3); both embrace Catullan ephemerality while preserving the Augustan *topos* of poetic eternity. Roman concludes by suggesting differences between the two poets, who employ contrasting treatments of socio-economic class and different strategies for maintaining poetic autonomy under Domitian.

Reception

The consideration of Statius' reception by later authors has become a topic of increasing interest to contemporary scholars, whose investigations are sharpening into focus the significant influence of his poetry upon later literature.⁸⁸ Sometimes this examination has been undertaken in the context of other notable Flavian writers.⁸⁹ Our own examination of Statius' reception (Section VII) begins with a chapter on his biography in later periods. Offering a broad survey of authors from late antiquity to the early modern period, **Ruth Parkes** (Chapter 26) introduces a phenomenon discussed by several authors in this section: since very little reliable biographical information survives from antiquity, what was known, not known, or thought to be known about Statius' life had a strong impact on how his work was interpreted and appropriated through time.⁹⁰ Parkes touches on authors such as Nemesianus, Claudian, Joseph of Exeter, John of Garland, Dante, Petrarch, Poliziano, and Hugo Grotius and argues that Statius' reception was particularly influenced by three biographical details: his self-advertised status as a Philhellene, a client poet, and an epigonal writer.

Helen Kaufmann (Chapter 27) then gives an overview of Statius' reception in late antique poetry and prose.⁹¹ Examining both "reception objects" (the aspect of a model used) and "reception modes" (how the usage is signaled), Kaufmann outlines the shift from "Augustan" (Paulinus of Nola, Prudentius, Ausonius) to "post-Augustan" (Claudian, Dracontius, Sidonius Apollinaris) poets of the late fourth century and early fifth centuries: the former were

87 Roman, pp. 444–61.

88 E.g., Zissos (2015).

89 E.g., Mulligan (forthcoming) on Statius' influence upon Claudian.

90 Parkes, pp. 465–80.

91 Kaufmann, pp. 481–96.

primarily Vergilian in language and style but engaged with Statius in other ways; the latter were more Statian on a formal level and also engaged with him through more complex reception objects and modes. Kaufmann then traces Statius' reception through commentators (Lactantius Placidus, Servius), grammarians, and other prose authors; unlike the poets, they almost completely ignore the *Silvae* in favor of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, which were used as authoritative texts for linguistic matters. Overall Claudian in poetry and Servius in prose emerge as key figures in the interest in Statius' works in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Section VII then turns to the Middle Ages, with Robert Edwards (Chapter 28) first showing (like Parkes, Chapter 26) how the reception of Statius' epics is shaped by his perception as a belated poet who acquired literary authority by following Vergil and Homer.⁹² Edwards begins with the Latin academic and pedagogical traditions, where multiple forms of commentary place Statius' poems in relation to their antecedents, then turns to the Medieval vernacular. Statius' epics were incorporated into Irish prose sagas and French poetic *chansons de geste*, particularly the twelfth-century *Roman de Thèbes*, in which they act as a structure of literary authority through which medieval writers re-examine the conventions of their own traditions. In the late Middle Ages Boccaccio's *Teseida* explores how courtly culture may redirect the history of Theban violence and power struggles into questions of love and governance; Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* challenges Boccaccio's thematic resolution of violence and desire with its tragic cast on the fraternal conflict; and John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* negotiates his claims of authority not only by following and succeeding Chaucer but also reworking the prominent Statian parent/child metaphor of the epilogue (discussed by Gervais, Chapter 13). Peter Heslin (Chapter 29) then focuses on Dante, Statius' most famous medieval successor, and specifically his characterization of Statius as a Christian in the *Purgatorio*.⁹³ Heslin describes a Dantean hermeneutics of pagan Latin literature that subordinates authorial intent and literal meaning to the spiritual intent of the reader who applies the light of Christian revelation. The Christianized Statius offers a middle road between the pagan theological certainties of Vergil and their radical deconstruction by Lucan (represented in the *Purgatorio* by Cato): a Christian reading of the *Thebaid* emphasizes the power of female prayer and Christ-like male figures who attempt to break cycles of retribution. Heslin concludes by suggesting a specific external factor that led Dante to this interpretation

92 Edwards, pp. 497–511.

93 Heslin, pp. 512–26.

of the *Thebaid*: Peter Abelard's linking of Statius' Altar of Clemency with the Christian God.

Pramit Chaudhuri (Chapter 30) extends Statius' Italian presence into the vernacular epics of the Renaissance by examining the reception of the *Thebaid*'s Capaneus in the character of Rodomonte in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.⁹⁴ Boiardo alludes especially to Capaneus' *agon* with Amphiaraus in *Thebaid* 3 in order to characterize Rodomonte's epistemological stance as a materialist whose autoptic empiricism is linked to Epicureanism. Ariosto alludes especially to Capaneus' *aristeia* in *Thebaid* 11 and boxing match in *Thebaid* 6; in the latter Ariosto employs sophisticated combinatorial allusion to suggest a hypothetical, anachronistic struggle between Statius' Capaneus and Vergil's Aeneas. Chaudhuri concludes with Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, in which an unexpected reconfiguration of Capaneus' impiety suggests his and Statius' importance in the exploration of various intellectual, cultural, and religious tensions during the Italian Renaissance.

The next two chapters move into the early modern period. **Valéry Berlincourt** (Chapter 31) discusses early modern Latin commentaries on the *Thebaid*.⁹⁵ In contrast to the fifteenth-century interest in the *Silvae* and *Achilleid*, original commentaries on the *Thebaid* were not published in print form until the late sixteenth century. Berlincourt begins with an overview of exegetical work in the period from Bernartius (1595) to Beraldus (1685) and highlights the greater interest in the *Silvae*, which ran alongside the blossoming of the *silva* genre. He then discusses the diverse exegetical strategies of various scholars and concludes with a close reading of matching sections of Beraldus' and Barth's full-scale commentaries: Beraldus focuses upon literal meaning and provides basic discussions of language, style, and context; Barth's prolix commentary ranges widely from *emendatio* to extracting moral lessons for his own world. **Dustin Mengelkoch**'s (Chapter 32) discussion of the fifteenth-century Italian scholar Poliziano and the seventeenth-century English poet Dryden offers a concise study of the reception of Statius that tracks his reputation from highpoint to decline.⁹⁶ Poliziano, who delivered his first university lectures in Florence on the *Silvae* and who wrote several poems in that genre, not only valued the occasional poetry of Statius for its erudition and polish but also promoted it as a literary model for his students. But Dryden found the learning of the *Silvae* ostentatious and Statius' style excessive, particularly in contrast to Vergil's heroic, balanced measures; Statius provided an example of

94 Chaudhuri, pp. 527–42.

95 Berlincourt, pp. 543–61.

96 Mengelkoch, pp. 562–78.

how *not* to write poetry. Although Dryden sets Statius on the path of a decline in prestige, he nonetheless acknowledges his importance since, like Poliziano, Dryden uses Statius to define his views of poetry in the early modern era.

The final chapters of Section VII (and of this volume) bring the reception of Statius to our own time. Like most scholars in this section, **Susanna Braund** (Chapter 33) focuses on the ways in which Statius' later readers made his writing meaningful for their own world; specifically she asks how, how well, and how justifiably English translators of the *Thebaid* have "naturalized" his poetry.⁹⁷ She first discusses the meaning of this oft-invoked concept, then turns to representative passages in early modern (Stephens, Lewis, Pope) and contemporary (Melville, Ross, Joyce) verse translations. Through specific discussion of the merits and flaws of these translations, Braund offers a vivid picture of the challenges of "naturalizing" a poem as full of unnatural passions as the *Thebaid*. Finally, **Carole Newlands** (Chapter 34) returns to Parkes' observation that later readers' perceptions of Statius' biography have influenced their interpretation of his work and, more specifically, that those perceptions may in turn be strongly influenced by ideology.⁹⁸ Thus the appreciation of Statius' work was greatly hampered in Europe and the United States from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries by puritan, neoclassical, and Republican writers who dismissed Statius as a decadent and servile flatterer of a tyrannical Domitian. Newlands demonstrates that such ideological criticisms persist today and shows (incidentally) the need for critical re-evaluations such as *Brill's Companion to Statius*, whose contributors understand that Statius' allusive, ironic, and ambiguous poetry in fact challenged Flavian social and political conditions in a peculiarly modern way.

Statius Immortal

At the end of *Silvae* 1.1, which was composed in 91 CE to mark the unveiling of an equestrian statue of Domitian, Statius evokes Horace, *Odes* 3.30 and the epilogue to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with a prayer for the statue's (and the emperor's) immortality (*Silv.* 1.1.99–107). But whereas Horace and Ovid stress the durability and immortality of poetry over earthly monuments, Statius keeps the focus on the emperor's statue by comparing it not directly with poetry but with other colossi—Phidias' great statue of Zeus in Athens, Lysippus' huge

97 Braund, pp. 579–99.

98 Newlands, pp. 600–12.

bronze statue of Herakles at Tarentum, and the Helios of Rhodes by Lysippus' pupil Chares—which are, however, no match for Domitian's equestrian statue:

optassetque nouo similem te ponere templo
 Atticus Elei senior Iouis, et tua mitis
 ora Tarans; tua sidereas imitantia flammās
 lumina contempto mallet Rhodos aspera Phoebō.

SILV. 1.1.101–4

The old Athenian would have wished to place you in his new temple because of your likeness to his Elean Jove; and mild Tarentum would have wished for your face; rocky Rhodes, scorning their Apollo, would have preferred your eyes that imitate starlike rays.

As Geyssen points out, the reference to Athens, Tarentum, Rhodes, all of which would have preferred Domitian's statue, shows the global dimension of Domitian's rule and fame.⁹⁹ In essence the all-seeing gaze of Helios of Rhodes is transformed into the all-seeing gaze of Domitian. Does this mean sinister surveillance, as Fredrick has argued, or benign rule and protection?¹⁰⁰ Or a bit of both? This set of comparisons draws attention to many of the issues that will be discussed in this book, including the relationships between Domitian and Statius and between Statius and his various friends and supporters; the relationship of Statius to his literary predecessors; the imperial, global context in which he writes; and his controversial aesthetic, which here in this set of “colossal” comparisons is open to the frequent charge of “excess” laid against his style.¹⁰¹ But as Umberto Eco argues in his essay “*Hugo, Hélas: The Poetics of Excess*,” to tell the story of excess a writer needs to use the techniques of excess.¹⁰² The horrors of Thebes, the global power of empire, equally demanded a vivid, heightened, “excessive” style.

But we should not ignore the subtlety also of Statius and his elusiveness. The last colossus mentioned in *Silvae* 1.1, the Colossus of Rhodes, had long been destroyed when Statius wrote his poem; indeed it had stood for only fifty-six

99 Geyssen (1996) 122–3. For a brief exposition of the contrasting approaches of Geyssen (1996) and Ahl (1984b) 91–102 to the equestrian statue of Domitian in *Silv.* 1.1, see Dominik (1998).

100 Fredrick (2003).

101 On the various styles of Statius see Dewar (forthcoming).

102 Eco (2013) 97–125. See also Kenney (1982) 572: “In language, theme and thought, the Statian manner is that of deliberate extremism.”

years when it was destroyed by an earthquake in 226 BCE. Thus, though Statius compares monument to monument, he implicitly ties the fate of Domitian's statue to that of his poem, which alone, unlike perishable sculpture, can secure the immortality of the statue and the emperor. Statius subtly shifts the comparison back to poetry—his own poetry. In so doing he provocatively suggests that the *Silvae* are a form of continuation of the *Thebaid*, where in the sphragis (12.810–19) he expressed his hopes for the work's immortality. By now beginning rather than ending his new poetic work with the comparison of monuments, he reminds us that he is not a novice poet but rather an established epic writer who can lay claim to monumentality for the *Silvae* too as a source of everlasting fame.

Neither Domitian nor Statius lived long after the monumental statue and poem were completed: Domitian died five years later in 96 CE, as did Statius, it seems, at the age of about forty-five. That his death was also only a year or two after he had begun work on the *Achilleid* adds a tragic air to his continued preoccupation with poetic and imperial fame in that epic's prologue (1.1–19). Statius set out to outdo Homer by taking as his subject the entire life of Achilles, but he made it only as far as his young hero's voyage from Scyros to Troy. Thus Statius leaves his readers in mid-voyage, which opens his poem to various creative forms of transmission and reception. Moreover, just as Statius set out to perpetuate Achilles' literary immortality, so with this tantalizing fragment of a second epic he assured his own poetic fame.

PART 2

Beginnings



Statius on Invocation and Inspiration

K. Sara Myers

Juvenal's inclusion of an invocation to Calliope and the Muses in his parody of Statius (*Sat.* 4.34–6) surely acknowledges Statius' frequent use of such invocations in his poetry (*lassata . . . totiens mihi numina, Musas*, "Muses, divinities so often worn out by me," *Silv.* 1.5.2).¹ The return of traditional epic invocations for divine inspiration after Lucan's recusal (1.63–6) is a notable feature of Flavian epic.² This chapter will examine the ways in which Statius exhibits a pervasive interest in experimenting with traditional forms of invocation and inspiration to express his own originality. As Hinds has written, "Ever since Hesiod's famous encounter at the beginning of the *Theogony* the introduction of the Muses, patron goddesses of literature, has always been a moment for the poet to turn in on himself so as to contemplate more obtrusively than elsewhere the nature of his own craft."³ The *Thebaid* and the *Silvae* share similar strategies of negation and negotiation in delineating forms of inspiration (divine, patron, Emperor), subject matter, and literary affiliations. Statius draws on a wide range of Greek and Roman poetic traditions of commencement strategies (epic, elegiac, lyric, hymnic) to define his own poetic projects and authorial position. Inspiration initiates a discourse about the relationship of the poet with power; often the problem of inspiration involves conflict, as the poet confronts the "field of potential tensions between different forces (the poet's own artistic intentions, the literary tradition, the material circumstances conditioning the poet's work)."⁴ Through his staged openings Statius stresses the performed nature of inspiration and draws attention to his literary choices and command of the literary tradition, while repeatedly negotiating the alternative authorial positions of poetical and political subordination and autonomy.

1 Rosati (2002a) 249; cf. Spentzou (2002) 22.

2 Lists in Steiniger (1998); Camilloni (1998).

3 Hinds (1987a) 3. Cf. Laird (2002) 128: "Invocations are always metapoetical: whenever a poet seeks divine assistance for a poem, the discourse of that poem itself becomes the theme."

4 Rosati (2002a) 232.

Thebaid

Proem

Statius' proem to the *Thebaid* and indeed the whole of the first book exhibit a self-conscious concern with the poetics of opening. All of the machinery of epic initiation is deployed: Muses (1.3–4), imperial encomium (17–33), the arousal of a fury (46–196), a divine council (197–311), a storm (336–89), and a hymn to Apollo (696–720). Literary models include Vergil and Ovid, Callimachus, Apollonius Rhodius, Homer, Lucretius, Lucan, and Horace.⁵ If the multiple endings of the poem serve to emphasize the arbitrariness of a conclusion to the poem's boundless subject,⁶ its numerous beginnings similarly indicate the difficulty of entering into such a long literary tradition. The poem's obsession with beginnings thematizes the difficulty of beginning any poem, but also activates the trope of belatedness, so central to the poetics of imperial Latin epic.⁷ Through his opening dialogue with the Muses Statius dramatizes his choice of topic, as his control over his narrative is challenged both by external influences and by the intractability and immenseness of his theme, which refuses to be limited. Muses (or their induced madness), the poet's mind (*mens*), and, finally, the emperor Domitian, are all introduced as possibly conflicting pressures vying to govern the narrative. In this epic, whose very subject is the contestation of authority, this competing authority over the very nature and direction of the poem at its commencement suggests a parallel between the poetics and themes of the narrative.

In the forty-five line proem Statius enunciates his theme largely through the negative strategies of *praeteritio* and *recusatio*; we hear more about what the poem will *not* be about than its chosen subject. Through a discourse with the Muses about his poetry, Statius both negotiates for himself authorial control and outlines the organization, themes, and limits of his poem.⁸ A traditional epic statement of thematic content, with well-known verbal links to Lucan's historical subject matter (Luc. 1.4–5), opens the poem and is immediately problematized in the next two lines:⁹

Fraternas acies alternaque regna profanis
decertata odiis sontesque euoluere Thebas

5 See Kytzler (1960); Carrara (1986); Mauri (1998); Taisne (2005).

6 Hardie (1997) 154.

7 Feeney (1991) 340–4; Henderson (1991) 68 n. 66; Hinds (1998) 91–8.

8 See Rosati (2002a).

9 See Vessey (1973) 61; Delarue (2000) 102.

Pierius menti calor incidit. unde iubetis
ire, deae?

THEB. 1.1–4

Fraternal warfare and alternate reigns fought over in impious hatred, and guilty Thebes, these themes a Pierian ardor falls upon my mind to unfold. Where do you command me to begin, goddesses?

Notably Statius includes neither a request for inspired song nor the expected verb of singing (e.g., *cano*; cf. e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 1.1, V. Fl. 1.1, Luc. 1.2, Sil. 1.2 [*ordior*]), but instead claims that his motivation and theme have been already imposed on him by a passion sent by the Muses (Pierian derives from an alternative name for the Muses, *Pierides*). The *Achilleid*, by contrast, begins with a Homeric request to the Muse: *diua, refer* (“goddess, tell,” 1.3). Many critics have spoken of the implications here in the *Thebaid* of the “accidental” quality¹⁰ of Statius’ poetic choice and the passivity of the poet in receiving this “unrequested” task.¹¹ Statius seems to be problematizing the very issue of poetic inspiration with his use of ostensibly contradictory terms: *menti* recalls the assertion of personal choice, while *calor* and *incidit* suggest an outside source, the traditional frenzy of poetic inspiration.¹² *Calor* in the *Silvae* is used of the excitement of extempore poetic composition (*subito calore*, 1 *praef.* 3; cf. Ov. *Pont.* 2.5.68) and might be translated in terms such as “ardor” or “enthusiasm,” thus approximating Statius’ motivation of poetic *amor* in the *Achilleid* proem (1.5).¹³ Elsewhere, as the *Thebaid* proceeds, stronger terms of madness will be used to figure inspiration. As early as 1.32 Statius will claim that in order to sing of Domitian’s deeds he will require an even stronger passion (*Pierio . . . oestro*, “a Pierian gadfly”); at 10.830 he will need *maior amentia* (“a greater madness”) to tell of Capaneus’ attack on heaven; and finally at 12.808 he cannot continue the poem, even if supplied with a *nouus furor* (“new frenzy”). Statius’ poetic madness takes on a “meta-narrative role” in the *Thebaid*,¹⁴ an epic in which *furor* is the central force which both gives the poem its momentum and

10 Ahl (1986) 2817.

11 Vessey (1986a) 2968; Rosati (2002a) 230.

12 See Mauri (1998) 225; Markus (2003) 437. For *calor* as a rhetorical term, see Quint. *Inst.* 10.3.17 (improvisation), Plin. *Ep.* 2.19.2.

13 Cf. Verg. *G.* 3.285, 292; Lucr. 1.922–5. See Gale (1994) 14–18. *Calor* is amatory at *Theb.* 3.701; *Achil.* 1.888; *Silv.* 1.2.89, 2.3.53.

14 Hershkowitz (1998) 63; cf. Schetter (1960) 5–20; Henderson (1991) 68 n. 73.

ultimately overwhelms its attempts to order and make sense of its subject.¹⁵ *Calor* is used elsewhere in the *Thebaid* only of the savage Tydeus: *rudis fandi pronusque calori / semper erat* ("he was always rude of speech and quick to wrath," 2.391–2; cf. 1.41–2).¹⁶ The inspiration of the poet is here figured as intimately related to the *furor* of his characters.¹⁷

In his opening lines Statius juxtaposes two traditional views of poetic inspiration: on the one hand is the idea of poetic inspiration as an external force, coming from "outside the rational self of the individual poet,"¹⁸ the famous "divine madness" of Plato's *Ion* (533e; cf. *Phdr.* 265b).¹⁹ This is contrasted with the view of poetry as a craft "in which rational control by the conscious self is paramount."²⁰ Ovid had similarly combined *animus* and the gods (*di*) in his proem (*Met.* 1.1–2) and Horace speaks of the *mens noua* ("new mind," *Carm.* 3.25.1–3) brought on by his possession by Bacchus.²¹ The juxtaposition, however, of the two alternative motivations, internal or external, human or divine, seems especially pointed in the *Thebaid*.²² Statius hereby involves his own authorial position with the central concern in the epic with causation and the contradictory claims of divine and psychological motivation, a dilemma with "a long intellectual history."²³ Feeney speaks of three competing power structures in the poem (divine, human, underworld), observing that "the first 300 lines deploy each of the three realms in turn (Oedipus 1.46ff., Tisiphone 88ff., Jupiter 197ff.)."²⁴ At 10.829–36, in his final invocation of the Muses, Statius conflates his poetic inspiration with Capaneus' impious final stand against

15 Schetter (1960) 19–21; Hershkovitz (1998) 248.

16 See Vessey (1973) 95–7, 293–4. Cf. *calorque / Martius* ("martial fury," *Achil.* 1.881–2).

17 Cf. Hardie (1997) 155: "it is impossible in a poet writing after Lucan not to hear a contamination of the poet's inspiration with the epic emotions of his characters." On the association of insanity with the writing of epic, see Prop. 3.3.15–16 (*demens*), 4.1.71; Hor. *Sat.* 1.10.34–5; Leigh (2006) 236.

18 Fowler (2002) 144.

19 Cf. Cic. *De Or.* 2.194, Hor. *Ars P.* 295–8, Petron. *Sat.* 118–19. See Hershkovitz (1998) 61–3.

20 Fowler (2002) 144.

21 Cf. Luc. 1.67, Cic. *Arch.* 18 (*poetam natura ipsa ualere et mentis uiribus excitari et quasi diuino quodam spiritu inflari*, "the poet flourishes by his own ability and is both stimulated by the powers of his mind and inspired as if by some divine breath"), Callim. *Aet.* 1 frags 5–9¹⁸ Massimilla (see Krevans [1991]). See Caviglia (1973a) *ad Theb.* 1.1–3; O'Hara (2004–2005).

22 Cf. *Silv.* 2.7.3, 76; Dams (1970) 140, 165–6.

23 Feeney (1991) 180; see also Hardie (1994) *ad Verg. Aen.* 9.184–5; Nuttall (1992) 4–9; Fowler (2002); O'Hara (2004–2005) 150.

24 Feeney (1991) 349. Cf. *Theb.* 1.324–7, 10.831–6, 12.420–4.

heaven.²⁵ His request for a new and more frenzied form of inspiration (*non mihi iam solito uatum de more canendum; / maior ab Aoniis poscenda amentia lucis*, “I may no longer sing in the usual manner of bards; a greater frenzy must be summoned from the Aonian groves,” 10.829–30) is followed by questions about whether Capaneus’ *furor* was motivated by Furies, his own desire for glory and fame, or the gods (831–6).²⁶ By destabilizing his own authorial position Statius’ proem enacts the power struggle operative at every level of the epic.

When Statius turns to address the Muses directly he does not then need to ask for inspiration, but instead about the direction and organization of the poem. Specifically, he requests a starting point: *unde iubetis / ire, deae?* (“where do you command me to begin, goddesses?”, 1.3–4)²⁷ This is a traditional gesture of epic commencement.²⁸ At the beginning of the *Odyssey* Homer asks the Muse for a starting point of action (“from some point in this story share your knowledge with us,” 1.10) and by the next line has his beginning (ἐνθ’, “from the time when,” 11). In the *Iliad*, however, Homer instructs the Muse where to begin (“of this sing from the point at which [ἐξ οὗ] first there parted in strife Atreus’ son, lord of men, and noble Achilles,” 1.6–7). But while Statius’ question seems initially to underline his reliance on the Muses’ guidance for the content of his song (*iubetis* recalls the language of literary request),²⁹ it is followed by an assertion of authorial direction concerning the limits and content of his poem:

gentisne canam primordia dirae,
Sidonios raptus et inexorable pactum
legis Agenoreae scrutantemque aequora Cadmum?
longa retro series, trepidum si Martis operti
agricolam infandis condentem proelia sulcis
expediam penitusque sequar, quo carmine muris
iusserit Amphion Tyriis accedere montes,
unde graues irae cognata in moenia Baccho,
quod saeuae Iunonis opus, cui sumpserit arcus

25 Leigh (2006) 235–41 suggests that Capaneus’ challenge also hints at Statius’ competition with Vergil.

26 See Williams (1972) *ad Theb.* 10.835 for a defense of the reading *fama*. Dominik (1994a) and (1994b) 43 n. 77 defends the variant *fata* mainly on thematic grounds.

27 Feeney (1991) 275; Rosati (2002a) 231.

28 See Race (1992) 24 on how ancient lyric and hymns similarly “dramatize the process of choice by posing questions” (e.g., Theoc. *Id.* 17.9–11); also Minton (1960).

29 White (1993) 266–8.

infelix Athamas, cur non expauerit ingens
 Ionium socio casura Palaemone mater.
*atque adeo iam nunc gemitus et prospera Cadmi
 praeteriisse sinam.*

THEB. 1.4–16

Shall I sing the origins of the dire race, the Sidonian rape, the inexorable compact of Agenor's law, and Cadmus searching the seas? The story runs far backwards in a long list, were I to tell of the fearful cultivator of hidden war, sowing battles in unholy furrows, and pursue to the uttermost what followed: with what song Amphion ordered the mountains approach the Tyrian walls, what caused Bacchus' fierce wrath against a kindred city, what deed savage Juno wrought, against whom unlucky Athamas took up his bow, why Palaemon's mother did not fear the vast Ionian sea when she was about to plunge in with her son. No; already I shall here and now allow the sorrows and joys of Cadmus to have passed.

The anticipated *canam* turns out to be a feint, although it may initially seem to follow the Vergilian pattern of a request to the Muse for origins (*Musa, mihi causas memora*, "Muse, tell me the causes," *Aen.* 1.8), with its series of indirect questions to be answered in typical proemial style (cf., e.g., Hes. *Theog.* 105–15, Verg. *G.* 1.1–5, Lucr. 1.127–35, V. Fl. 3.15–19, Sil. 1.3–8). Statius' question will be answered in the negative: he will not in fact "sing" these topics, but pass them by (1.16); the Muses will not be allowed to answer the traditional proemial questions of origins.³⁰ The following eleven lines list a host of rejected potential beginnings for Statius' epic and provide an outline and summary of the prehistory of the Theban myth. By rehearsing this series, Statius self-consciously focuses our attention on the actual process and practice of narration and "the unavoidable *difficulty of beginning*."³¹ He will reassert authorial control and draw the reader's attention to the process of selectivity involved in narration.³² The rhetoric of *praeteritio* "marks the (willful) entrance of the

30 Contrast Sil. 1.17–20: *tantarum causas irarum...fas aperire mihi superasque recludere mentes. / iamque adeo magni repetam primordia motus* ("I am allowed to reveal the causes of such fierce anger... and to disclose the intentions of the gods. And now I shall trace the beginnings of this great upheaval"). In Statius' proem the dialogue with the Muses is not resumed until line 41.

31 Genette (1980) 46 (his italics), quoted in Hunter (1993) 122–3; cf. Goldhill (1991) 291–2.

32 Hunter (2001) 113. See Pollmann (2004) 28–31 on the literary background.

narrator into the narrative"³³ and provides him with a way to define his theme against the literary tradition.³⁴

The dilemma of where to begin has particular resonance in this tale of inherited guilt. At 1.224–43 Jupiter recalls and rejects the narration of the causes of Theban guilt in another *praeteritio* (*quis... nesciat?*, "who doesn't know?", 227–8), thus affirming Statius' narrative choice to begin *more Homericō a mediis uel ultimis* ("in the Homeric manner, in the middle or at the end," Quint. *Inst.* 7.10.11), conforming to Aristotelian standards of an epic plot of unified action.³⁵ The opening of the *Achilleid* markedly differs in its declaration of intent to tell the whole story (*ire per omnem... herōa*, "to recount the whole life of the hero," 1.4–5).³⁶ In a gesture typical of his well-known thematization of secondariness, Statius signals here in the *Thebaid* his indebtedness to Ovid's treatment of Theban prehistory in *Metamorphoses* 3.1–4.603 and seeks to establish for himself a new poetic space (cf. *Achil.* 1.4: *plura uacant*, "more remains untold").³⁷ Statius' *praeteritio* may also be seen as a polemical "Callimachean" rejection of the comprehensiveness of the cyclic epic tradition, as represented by the epic *Thebaid* of the late fifth-century poet Antimachus of Colophon.³⁸ At the end of the list Statius finally declares his starting point and theme: *limes mihi carminis esto / Oedipodae confusa domus* ("let the disturbed house of Oedipus be the track of my song," 1.16–17).³⁹ It is not clear whether the Muses have assisted in this choice. If they have dictated this theme to Statius (*ex silentio*) then their limiting function may parallel Apollo's actions in Callimachus' *Aetia* 1 (frag. 1.21–8 Massimilla) and the *Hymn to Apollo* (108–112).⁴⁰ Others suggest that the

33 Goldhill (1991) 290.

34 Statius' proemial strategy has much in common with the opening of Apollonius' *Argonautica*; see Mauri (1998) 223. Apollonius uses *praeteritio* (1.18–19) and delays his Muses until the end of the proem, where they are invoked as "interpreters" (1.22); see Hunter (1993) 123–5; Goldhill (1991) 290, 297–8.

35 Carrara (1986) 152; Heath (1989) 69; Nuttall (1992) 27; Barchiesi (2001) 322; cf. Arist. *Poet.* 5.116–29, Hor. *Ars P.* 147.

36 Carrara (1986) 149 n. 9; Heath (1989) 70; Aricò (1996) 189–92; Barchiesi (1996) 59; Hinds (1998) 96, 142.

37 Vessey (1986a) 2971; Hardie (1993) 226 n. 13.

38 Carrara (1986); Mauri (1998) 222. See Matthews (1996) 20–2.

39 For *limes* as "path" (not "limit", as usually translated), cf. *Silv.* 5.3.237–8 (*labat incerto mihi limite cursus / te sine*, "my progress falters on an uncertain path without you" [of the *Thebaid*]), Mart. 11.90.1 (I owe these parallels to Tony Woodman).

40 Carrara (1986) 150; cf. Mauri (1998) 223.

Muses of epic here introduce the possibility of cyclic or Antimachean epic and the poet himself imposes the limit.⁴¹

One of the more remarkable aspects of Statius' proem to the *Thebaid* is the absence of an invocation to the emperor as an inspirational source, an increasingly frequent feature in Latin epic since the Augustan age, appearing in both Lucan and Valerius Flaccus.⁴² Statius invokes Domitian for inspiration only in *Silvae* 5.1, for a private patron's dead wife,⁴³ while his request for the emperor's favor at *Achilleid* 1.17 (*da ueniam*, "grant pardon") functions instead as a *recusatio*.⁴⁴ In the *Thebaid*'s proem *praeteritio* is followed by *recusatio*, through which Statius evokes elegiac and lyric models of temporal deferral (*nondum*, "not yet," *Theb.* 1.17)⁴⁵ to define his mythological epic in opposition to a panegyric epic about the exploits of the emperor Domitian, as he will again at the beginning of the *Achilleid* (1.14–19; cf. also *Silv.* 4.4.87):

quando Itala nondum
signa nec Arctoos ausim spirare triumphos
bisque iugo Rhenum, bis adactum legibus Histrum.
.....
tempus erit, cum Pierio tua fortior oestro
facta canam: nunc tendo chelyn satis arma referre
Aonia et geminis sceptrum exitiale tyrannis.

THEB. 1.17–19, 32–4

For not yet do I dare breathe forth Italian standards and northern triumphs or Rhine twice subjugated, Hister twice forced to submit to our laws. . . . There will come a time when stronger in Pierian frenzy I shall sing your deeds. For now I but tune my lyre enough to recount Aonian arms and the scepter fatal to both tyrants.

In contrast to the elegiac and Callimachean model of the rejection of lofty and often martial narrative, however, Statius' *nunc* announces themes

41 Georgacopoulou (1996a) 181; cf. Ahl (1986) 2817.

42 See Verg. *G.* 1.24–42, Ov. *Fast.* 1.17–18, Man. 1.7–10, German. *Arat.* 1–16, Luc. 1.63–6, V. Fl. 1.7–21, Calp. *Ecl.* 4.82–6, Sil. 3.571–629. See also Caviglia (1973a) 93; White (1993) 20; Rosati (2002a) 238–44; Markus (2003); Nauta (2008) 29.

43 See below, p. 53.

44 Contrast *Achil.* 1.9: *da fontes mihi, Phoebe, nouos* ("give me, Phoebus, new springs"). See Barchiesi (1996) 56; Nauta (2006) 32.

45 For *nondum* versus *nunc*, cf., e.g., Prop. 2.10.23, 3.9.3–6; Verg. *G.* 3.46. Cf. also Ap. Rhod. 1.20.

(*arma . . . Aonia*)⁴⁶ that are equivalent to Apollo's vetoed *reges et proelia* ("kings and battles") at Vergil, *Eclogues* 6.3. Statius adopts Valerius Flaccus' strategy of incorporating imperial homage with a *recusatio* of historical epic (V. Fl. 1.11–14), but stops short of invoking the emperor as a divine source of inspiration.⁴⁷ Statius, in fact, treats Domitian's apotheosis (1.30–1) "in markedly guarded terms."⁴⁸ To sing of Domitian's deeds Statius requires an even stronger form of poetic madness (32–3). This absent form of inspiration (*oestrus*, "a gadfly") is precisely the sort that Statius associates instead with Lucan's epic in *Silvae* 2.7 (*docto pectora concitatus oestro*, "roused in their hearts by a learned gadfly," 3; cf. *carmen fortior exseris togatum*, "more boldly you unsheath a Roman poem," 53),⁴⁹ where, again, with *docto*, he juxtaposes two conflicting views of poetic inspiration, learned and inspired.⁵⁰ Statius thus distances himself from Lucan's poetic madness in choosing mythological over historical epic, as well as in eschewing an invocation of the emperor. Statius' contrast of the rejected topic of *Itala signa* (1.17–18) with his chosen *arma Aonia* (33–4) may, however, ultimately hint at a parallelism between contemporary and mythological themes. The inclusion of imperial praise in the proem, sandwiched between *praeteritio* and further amplification of Statius' theme (33–40), seems to implicate "both those 'cut' Theban preliminaries" and Domitian's exploits in the same *longa . . . series*.⁵¹

So far in the proem Statius has combined the opening strategies of traditional epic with those of panegyric and elegiac *recusatio*; next he evokes the lyric mode in his second appeal to the Muses, this time specifically to Clio: *quem prius heroum, Clio, dabis?* ("which hero, Clio, will you first offer?", 1.41). Statius' first question of the Muses (1.3–6) had asked for a commencement point for the Theban story; now Statius similarly asks about a matter of

46 *Aonia* refers to both the Theban setting and also the Boeotian (Heliconian) Muses (*OLD* s.v. 2b); cf. *Achil.* 1.10, *Silv.* 2.7.13; see Barchiesi (1996) 54; Nauta (2008) 31.

47 Valerius Flaccus rejects panegyric of Titus' exploits in Judaea for *ueterum . . . facta uirum* ("the deeds of ancient heroes," 1.11–12). Cf. *Silv.* 4.4.94–100 (100 *nondum*). See Nauta (2008) 27–34; Zissos (2008) 81–7.

48 Feeney (1991) 358; cf. Schubert (1984) 129–31; Ahl (1986) 2820; Rosati (2008).

49 See Dominik (1994b) 168–70, (2003) 106–8. On Statius' use of *oestrus*, see van Dam (1984) and Newlands (2011b) *ad Silv.* 2.7.3; cf. Verg. *G.* 3.147–8 (with Thomas [1988] *ad loc.*). *Oestrus* is used metaphorically for Bacchic "frenzy" at *Ciris* 184, Sen. *Oed.* 443; cf. Ap. Rhod. 1.1265–9. Juvenal perhaps parodies Statius' usage at *Sat.* 4.123–4.

50 See Newlands (2011b) *ad loc.*

51 Henderson (1991) 39; cf. Ahl (1986) 2818–9; Dominik (1994b) 168–72, (2003) 96–98, 106–8.

narrative order.⁵² Here, as has long been seen, Statius' question evokes the imitation of the famous opening of Pindar's second Olympian in Horace's *Odes*: *quem uirum aut heroa lyra uel acri / tibia sumis celebrare Clio?* ("which man or hero do you choose to celebrate with lyre or shrill pipe, Clio?", Hor. *Carm.* 1.12.1–2; cf. *quid prius*, 13).⁵³ In Horace the "rhapsodic question"⁵⁴ to Clio evokes her etymological association with praise (κλέειν ~ *celebrare*) and introduces encomia of gods and rulers, as had Pindar's questions in his second Olympian ode.⁵⁵ This contrasts starkly with the *Thebaid* proem, where Statius has just declined such an undertaking. The invocation of Clio, Muse of history, immediately after the *recusatio* of historical epic, again seems paradoxical.⁵⁶ Clio introduces instead an abbreviated catalogue listing the horrors associated with five of Statius' (seven) mythological Theban heroes (1.41–5).⁵⁷ Here finally the verb *canere* is used of a theme that will actually be sung: *alio Capaneus horrore canendus* ("Capaneus must be sung of with a different dread," 45), but in a way that denotes compulsion, rather than free will (cf. *dabis*, "you will give," 41; *urquet*, "demands," 43; *ploranda*, "must be lamented," 44).⁵⁸ Statius' dialogue with the Muses enacts a struggle for power.⁵⁹ While the compulsion of the Muses trumps that of the emperor, allowing Statius to avoid imperial

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- 52 The question of priority is again traditional in invocations: cf., e.g., Hom. *Il.* 14.508, Theoc. *Id.* 17.1–12, Ap. Rhod. 1.23, Callim. *Hymn* 4.82–5; see Häussler (1973) 120 n. 16; Race (1992) 23. On the circularity of the prologue, see Schetter (1962) 216; Caviglia (1973a) *ad Theb.* 1.41–5.
- 53 Schetter (1962) 216 n. 50; Caviglia (1973) *ad Theb.* 1.41–5; Georgacopoulou (1996a) 173. Theoc. *Id.* 17 is also a model for Horace (Hunter [2003] 95–6) and shares an opening priamel structure with the *Thebaid*. Hor. *Sat.* 2.6 has a similar rhapsodic opening: *quid prius illustrem* ("what should I sooner glorify?", 17); *tu carminis esto / principium* ("you be the opening of my song," 22–3).
- 54 Race (1992) 21.
- 55 See Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) *ad Hor. Carm.* 1.12.2. Clio is invoked elsewhere in Latin poetry only at V. Fl. 3.15–17; she appears in Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.27; *Fast.* 5.54, 6.801, 811. Clio was Callimachus' first interlocutor in the *Aetia* (*Schol. Flor. Callim.* 30 on frags 5–9¹⁸; cf. frag. 50.56 Massimilla).
- 56 Häussler (1978) 182–3. On the problem of the dating of the attribution of the Muses to specific spheres, see West (1966) *ad Hes. Theog.* 76; Fedeli (1985) *ad Prop.* 3.33; Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) *ad Hor. Carm.* 1.24.3; Hinds (1987a) 139 n. 41; Barchiesi (1991) 10–11; Hardie (2009). Clio is associated with the *Thebaid* in *Silv.* 1.5.14.
- 57 Georgacopoulou (1996a) 174, (2005) 182–3; Steininger (1998) 227 n. 23; cf. Caviglia (1973a) 96; Markus (2003) 447. Apollonius too began with a catalogue of heroes (1.23–233).
- 58 Contrast Pindar's quick answer (*Ol.* 2.5–6) and Horace's confident assertions (*neque te silebo*, "nor will I pass over you in silence," *Carm.* 1.12.21; *dicam*, "I shall speak of," 25; *referam*, "I shall relate," 39).
- 59 See esp. Rosati (2002a); Dominik (2003); Markus (2003).

panegyric and assert his narrative authority, his savage theme will exert its own pressures. The dilatoriness of the epic's progression towards martial exploits, indicative of the confusion of its subject, will be to some extent a function of its unwilling narrator.

Invocations of the Muses

Statius invokes the Muses six more times in the *Thebaid* on occasions conventional to the epic tradition, such as introducing another catalogue (Calliope, 4.32–8) and marking high points in battle, especially the *aristeiai* and deaths of heroes (*Pieriae... sorores*, 7.628–31 [*aristeia* of Amphiaraus]; Calliope and Apollo, 8.373–4 [second day of battle]; *doctae... sorores*, 9.315–50 [Hippomedon's death]; Clio, 10.628–31 [Menoeceus' *deuotio*]; *omnes... deae*, 10.827–36 [Capaneus' death]).⁶⁰ A closer examination of a few of these passages reveals how Statius' invocations in the *Thebaid* signal thematic and generic directions in his poem, underlining the narrative's dilatory movement and the narrator's need of increasingly stronger forms of inspiration as the poem nears its violent climax.

Clio is invoked once more, in book 10. Here Tiresias receives a prophecy demanding the *deuotio* of Menoeceus (10.604–15), which Creon entreats him in vain to keep hidden (625–6). An invocation to Clio follows to tell of Virtus' instigation of Menoeceus:

nunc age, quis stimulos et pulchrae gaudia mortis
addiderit iuueni (neque enim haec absentibus umquam
mens homini transmissa deis), memor incipe Clio,
saecula te quoniam penes et digesta uetustas.

THEB. 10.628–31

Come now, who spurred the youth on to joy in a glorious death (for never without the presence of the gods is this state of mind given to a man), unforgetting Clio, begin to tell, since the ages are in your power, and the ordering of antiquity.

Statius' association of Clio with memory and the historical record suggests traditional narrative authentication,⁶¹ but serves here to signal Statius'

60 See Steiniger (1998). Cf., e.g., Hom. *Il.* 11.218–20 (*aristeia* of Agamemnon), Verg. *Aen.* 9.525–8 (Calliope invoked for Turnus' attack on the Trojan camp).

61 Cf. *arcana Vetustas*, 4.32; also *Silv.* 1.6.39, 4.1.28. For the association of Muses and memory, see Hes. *Theog.* 54; Pind. *Nem.* 1.11; Verg. *Aen.* 1.8, 7.645; Murray (1981) 92–3; O'Hara (1996) 115.

innovation in having the personification Virtus, instead of a god, descend to earth to motivate Menoeceus.⁶² Statius' emphasis on divine intervention both ironically draws attention to his deviation from tradition and also creates a parallel with his own poetic motivation, with *stimulos* (628) and *mens* (630) recalling *oestro* (1.32) and *menti* (1.3). Statius' gesture towards the expected epic treatment serves as "an invitation to join him in testing the confines of his 'coercive tradition.'"⁶³

The choice of the epic Muse Calliope for the invocation at the commencement of the catalogue of Argive forces draws attention to the generic conventionality of such an appeal (cf. Hom. *Il.* 2.484–93; Verg. *Aen.* 7.641–6, 10.163–5) and the impending approach of battle narrative.⁶⁴

nunc mihi, Fama prior mundique arcana Vetustas,
cui meminisse ducum uitasque extendere curae,
pande uiros, tuque o nemoris regina sonori,
Calliope, quas ille manus, quae mouerit arma
Gradius, quantas populis solauerit urbes,
sublata molire *lyra*: neque enim *altior* ulli
mens hausto de fonte uenit.

THEB. 4.32–8

Now, Fame of earlier times and secret Antiquity of the world, whose care it is to remember leaders and extend their lives, reveal to me the men, and you, queen of the sonorous grove, Calliope, with your uplifted lyre labor to tell what bands, what arms Gradivus roused, how many cities he deprived of their peoples. For to none comes a loftier mind from the fountain's draught.

The invocation echoes Vergil's introduction to the Italian catalogue (*pandite nunc Helicon, deae*, "now, goddesses, throw open Helicon," *Aen.* 7.642), but

62 See Feeney (1991) 382; Georgacopoulou (1996a) 169. Such appeals to antiquity frequently draw attention to originality: cf. Verg. *Aen.* 9.77–9, 10.792 (Lausus' self-sacrifice, which seems to be Vergilian invention; see Harrison [1991] *ad loc.*); Ovid *Met.* 1.400, *Fast.* 4.203–4. See Micozzi (2007b) *ad Theb.* 4.32.

63 Feeney (1991) 344, citing Vessey (1973) 258. Statius varies a formula: cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.777–8 (*non haec sine numine diuum / eueniunt*, "these things do not happen without the authority of the gods"), 5.56–7, 6.368.

64 Juhnke (1972) 88. See Georgacopoulou (2005) 162–70. The catalogue of the Theban allies at *Theb.* 7.243–373 has no invocation, but McNelis (2004) 281 observes that 7.282–9 "virtually generates an appeal to the Muse"; see also Barchiesi (1996) 53 n. 21.

Statius transfers the Muses' traditional authenticating task first to the personifications Fama and Vetustas, effectively reversing the Vergilian emphasis: *et meministis enim, diuiae, et memorare potestis; / ad nos uix tenuis famae perlabitur aura* ("for you remember, goddesses, and are able to recall; to us scarcely a faint breath of report filters down," *Aen.* 7.645–6).⁶⁵ Statius' invocation of Fama and Vetustas usurps much of the Muses' divine authority and emphasizes instead the literary and antiquarian tradition. Similarly, in book 9 the Muses (specified as learned; cf. *doctas . . . Aonidas*, *Theb.* 4.182–3) are tasked with conducting antiquarian research in order to tell of Hippomedon's death: *doctae nosse indulgete sorores: / uestrum opus ire retro et senium depellere famae* ("learned sisters, allow me to know: it is your task to go backwards and repel senility from Fame," *Theb.* 9.317–18). When he finally turns to Calliope, Statius underlines her epic associations (*regina*, 4.34; cf. *dux ipsa*, *Silv.* 5.3.15; *regina . . . Calliope*, *Hor. Carm.* 3.4.2)⁶⁶ and qualifies his required inspiration as more elevated (4.37–8). In this way Statius sets up expectations that epic war narrative is about to commence, which will be frustrated by the end of the book.

At *Thebaid* 4.646–51 the Argives reach Nemea and an invocation to Apollo signals programmatically the long narrative delay of the story of Hypsipyle and the funeral games of Opheltes/Archemorus (4.646–6.946). Statius introduces a "Callimachean" Apollo, invoked in a request for information (*doce*) reminiscent of aetiological inquiry,⁶⁷ who announces a Callimachean digression from teleological martial epic: *quis iras / flexerit, unde morae, medius quis euntibus error, / Phoebe, doce: nos rara manent exordia famae* ("Tell, Phoebus, who turned their anger aside, whence came delays, how in the middle of the journey they went astray. For us only scattered beginnings of the story remain," 4.649–51).⁶⁸ In a strategy typical of the epic, Statius deflects the narrative away from epic warfare (*iras*) by a digression indebted primarily to non-martial epic literary models. The episode has been shown to owe much to Callimachus' aetiology of the Nemean games in the *Victoria Berenices* (*Aet.* 3 *SH* 257–69);⁶⁹

65 Georgacopoulou (2005) 167; Micozzi (2007) *ad Theb.* 4.32. Cf. *Silv.* 1.1.8, 4.1.28; *Ov. Met.* 15.622–3; *Sil.* 3.222 (introducing a catalogue).

66 Cf. *Hes. Theog.* 79–80, *Ov. Met.* 5.662 (*e nobis maxima*, "the greatest of us"); Hinds (1987a) 125–34. Lucan is associated with Calliope in *Silv.* 2.7.

67 Brown (1994) 41–3. Cf. *Silv.* 1.2.46–9; *Ov. Fast.* 5.191, 635. For the Callimachean "warning Apollo," see *Callim. Aet.* 1 frag. 1.22–8 Massimilla, *Verg. Ecl.* 6.3–5, *Prop.* 3.3.13–26, *Hor. Carm.* 4.15.1–4.

68 McNelis (2007) 93–5.

69 Lehnus (1980); Colace (1982); Brown (1994); McNelis (2004) 77. On the motif of delay in the *Thebaid*, see Feeney (1991) 339; McNelis (2007) 86–93. Cf. *Theb.* 5.743–4.

invocations to Apollo frame the lengthy Nemea episode and the god may be seen to embody the two conflicting generic tendencies in the epic: the “Callimachean” poetics of “minor” poetry (elegy, lyric) and non-martial themes versus martial “super-epic.”⁷⁰

At *Thebaid* 6.296–300 Apollo is again invoked, this time for the catalogue of the contestants of the chariot race, which form a part of the funeral games for Opheltēs: *dic incluta, Phoebe, regentum / nomina, dic ipsos* (“Phoebus, tell the famous names of the drivers, tell the horses themselves,” 6.295–6). These athletic competitions serve as the foundation for the Nemean games, as well as a prelude to the commencement of battle in the following book. The invocation signals “the games as a microcosm of war in the second half of the *Thebaid*.”⁷¹ Apollo’s association with a loftier tradition of poetry (*incluta... nomina*; cf. *maiorque... Apollo*, “a greater Apollo,” 8.374)⁷² is underlined soon again in his appearance at 6.358–64 singing to the Muses of gigantomachy and natural philosophical cosmogony (cf. *Silv.* 4.2.56, *Tib.* 2.5.9–10, *V. Fl.* 5.692–3).⁷³ While natural philosophical themes share both epic and Alexandrian associations,⁷⁴ Apollo’s dutiful songs of divine praise (*pius cantarat*, “he had sung dutifully,” 6.359) strike a grander note of epic and encomium.⁷⁵ The figure of Apollo develops from a poetic to an increasingly political symbol in the Augustan period.⁷⁶ In Statius we witness the metamorphosis of the god of poetry “into a god of civil war poetics and Flavian politics.”⁷⁷ When Apollo at 6.491–8 “leaves his cosmic song to become spectator (and disruptor) of the games” by

70 Barchiesi (2001) esp. 342–3, 350–1; Henderson (1991) 66 n. 45. Newlands (2009a) 360 n. 33 notes both traditions are “subject to Statius’ inflationary impulses.” On the similar generic tensions in the Linus and Coroebus episode in *Theb.* 1, see McNelis (2007) 33–40; Steininger (2005) 222.

71 Lovatt (2005) 17, 257–61.

72 *Inclutus* is already solemnly archaic in Ennius (see Skutsch [1985] *ad Ann.* 146; Pavan [2009] *ad Theb.* 6.296).

73 Also *Hom. Il.* 1.603–4; see Venini (1961a) 384; Vessey (1973) 213–14.

74 See Myers (1994) 7–12; Casali (1997).

75 Cf. *Ov. Met.* 10.150: *cecini plectro grauiore Gigantas* (“I have sung of the giants on a weightier lyre”); Delz (1998) 384. Such themes traditionally are rejected in elegiac *recusationes* (e.g., *Prop.* 2.1.19–20, *Hor. Epist.* 1.12.14–20); see Innes (1979). Watt (2000) 519–20 suggests that Apollo on this occasion rejects encomium for philosophy.

76 Miller (2009) esp. 372 on the gigantomachy in *Tib.* 2.5.1–10 (invocation of Apollo *ad laudes*) “signifying the celebration of Augustan victory in the context of the Palatine temple.”

77 Newlands (2009a) 374.

sending another destructive monster to earth (498),⁷⁸ he signals the return of disorder and violence. Apollo deserts his role as poet (*mulcens*, “soothing,” 355) to become a highly ambiguous divine epic protagonist (cf. *saeuus ego immeritusque coli*, “I am cruel and unworthy of worship,” 9.657).⁷⁹ Feeney has similarly suggested that Statius invokes Apollo at the beginning of the *Achilleid* (1.9) “because Phoebus will be there at the end, when he kills Achilles, with Paris, at the Scaean Gate.”⁸⁰

After an invocation of the Muses at 7.628–31 to signal the first stage of the battle and introduce the “Iliadic” half of the *Thebaid*,⁸¹ Calliope is again invoked, with an elevated Apollo, to supply renewed inspiration for the narration of the escalation of combat on the second day of battle: *sed iam bella uocant: alias noua suggere uires, / Calliope, maiorque chelyn mihi tendat Apollo* (“But now battles call me. Let a new Calliope supply fresh strength, let a greater Apollo tune my lyre,” 8.373–4).⁸² In his final invocation to the Muses, for Capaneus’ assault on heaven (10.827–36), Statius requests *maior...amentia* (“greater madness,” 830) to match the *furor* of his protagonist.⁸³ When he reaches the climax of the twin fratricides of Polynices and Eteocles, Statius can call only on the Furies (*Stygiae...diuiae*, “Stygian goddesses,” 11.576), as the celestial gods have withdrawn from the action of the poem (11.119–35).⁸⁴ Finally, Statius asks the Furies to nullify the memorializing power of the Muses and his poetry: *monstrumque infame futuris / excidat, et soli memorent haec proelia reges* (“let the infamous monstrosity be forgotten by future generations and kings alone remember this combat,” 11.578–9).⁸⁵ This withdrawal from narrative authority is, however, reversed in Statius’ reassertion of poetic immortality in the epilogue of the *Thebaid* (*uiue, precor*, “live, I pray,” 12.816).⁸⁶

78 Lovatt (2005) 109. Cf. Apollo’s monster in *Theb.* 1.596–626; see Ahl (1986) 2853–4.

79 Pavan (2009) 167.

80 Feeney (2004) 88. For the proemial function of the hymn to Apollo at *Theb.* 1.696–720, see McNelis (2007) 49; Newlands (2009a).

81 Smolenaars (1996) *ad loc.*

82 The invocation is indebted to Vergil’s “proem in the middle” at *Aen.* 7.37–45 (*horrida bella, “savage wars,”* 41; *maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, / maius opus moueo*, “a greater sequence of events arises; I undertake a greater task,” 44–5) and 7.641–6. On parallels between *Aen.* 7 and *Theb.* 7, see Smolenaars (1996) xxxvi; McNelis (2004), (2007) 97–123.

83 See Vessey (1973) 222; Hershkowitz (1998) 64.

84 Steiniger (1998) 226.

85 Cf. Lucan’s abnegation of epic commemoration at 7.552–6, with Feeney (1991) 277; Masters (1989) 106.

86 On these two scenes, see Gervais, pp. 231–7 in this volume.

Silvae

The *Silvae* exhibit a widespread concern with identifying Statius' sources of inspiration and with generic self-definition. In his finely tuned negotiations of poetic autonomy Statius uses poetic invocation to delineate his new poetic aims and his position towards social and political authority, often through contrast with his epic compositions. Statius' persona in the *Silvae* is that of an epic poet at play, who has only temporarily abandoned this higher genre for a wholly new and original departure in a lighter vein (*nec quisquam est illustrium poetarum qui non aliquid operibus suis stilo remissiore praeluserit*, "nor is there any other of the famous poets who has not preluded his works with something in a lighter style," 1 *praef.* 8–9; cf. 4 *praef.* 28–30).⁸⁷ The impromptu and performative nature of Statius' composition in the *Silvae* requires the speed and facility provided by poetic inspiration: *hos libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi uoluptate fluxerunt* ("these poems which poured forth from me in the heat of the moment and from a certain pleasure in speed," 1 *praef.* 3–4).⁸⁸ The *Silvae* fashion themselves as "light" poetry, and Statius frequently employs language associated with Callimachean ideals of artistic refinement, but they also boast of incorporating a stylistic grandeur associated with epic and encomium.⁸⁹ Statius often invokes divine inspiration at the outset of a poem in a manner that underlines the innovative poetics of the *Silvae*, as well as their encomiastic function. In his invocations for inspiration Statius is adapting from archaic hymns and lyric, as well as epic, utilizing especially "professional" encomiastic strategies of lyric, already revived by the Hellenistic poets.⁹⁰ At *Silvae* 1.2.256–7 Statius embraces the breadth of his poetic endeavors and claims that his inspiration is eclectic: *me certe non unus amor simplexque canendi / causa trahit* ("in my case, it is no single love nor any simple motive for singing that draws me on").

Silvae 3.1 celebrates a new temple to Hercules on the shore of the estate of his patron Pollius Felix. Two cletic hymns to Hercules (23–48, 154–62) invoke the god/hero to help both in the building of the temple and the praising of Pollius.⁹¹ Statius summons a suitably disarmed Hercules (34–6, 39 [*pacatusque mitisque ueni*, "come in a peaceful and gentle spirit"]) to assist in constructing for himself a new temple to replace the earlier humble one, which was

87 Newlands (2002); Gibson (2006); Nauta (2008).

88 Cf. Rosati, pp. 54–72 in this volume.

89 A. Hardie (1983) 74; Newlands (201b) 3.

90 A. Hardie (1983) 85–91; Newlands (2002) 31; Rosati (2002a) 247; Markus (2003).

91 See A. Hardie (1983) 125–6.

inadequate (characterized in Callimachean terms of refinement as *parua ara*, “small altar,” 9; *angusta aedes*, “narrow shrine,” 88; *tenuis casa*, “meager dwelling,” 82). Hercules is summoned not to the *pauperis arua Molorchi* (“the fields of pauper Molorchus,” 29) of Callimachus’ *Aetia* 3,⁹² but to a newly enriched temple: *ingenti diues Tirynthius arce* (“the Tirynthian enriched by his great tower,” 136). The epicizing invocation to Calliope in a request for origins (*exordia templi* / *dic age, Calliope; socius tibi grande sonabit* / *Alcides*, “come, Calliope, tell the beginnings of the temple and Hercules will accompany you loudly,” 49–51)⁹³ underlines Statius’ provocative accommodation of Callimachean values to his new paradoxical poetics of grandeur encompassed in a small scale.⁹⁴

Statius modifies his invocational strategies to suit his different aims and patrons in the individual *Silvae*. His calculated qualifications allow him to define the nature of the poems by specifying the appropriate forms of inspiration.⁹⁵ Thus Erato is invoked for Stella’s wedding (*Silv.* 1.2), Naiads for Vopsicus’ baths (1.5), Saturnus and his followers for the Saturnalia poem in hendecasyllabics (1.6), marine deities for the propempticon to Maecius Celer (3.2), and so on. In a similar manner, Vergil, for example, invokes befitting inspirational deities—in the *Eclogues* nymphs (7.21) and Arethusa (10.1), in the *Georgics* agricultural deities (1.5–23, 2.1–8)—Ovid invokes Venus in the *Ars Amatoria* (1.30), and Grattius invokes Diana (*Cynegetica* 2).

Often Statius adopts a strategy of delineating his poetic aims through the dismissal of conventional deities of inspiration in a recusatory structure similar to the features of *praeteritio* and priamel in the proem of the *Thebaid* (*Silv.* 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.3, 5.1, 5.3). The traditional Muses and gods of epic are rejected in favor of forms of inspiration appropriate to the “lighter” poetry of the *Silvae*.⁹⁶ The *Silvae* are thus characterized in opposition to his epic composition. In 1.6.1–6 Statius sends on vacation Phoebus, “austere” Pallas (*seuera*), and the Muses and calls instead on Saturn, December, *Iocus* (“Fun”), and *Sales* (“Jokes”) for a hendecasyllabic poem celebrating the Saturnalia, but he will recall the loftier divinities on the first of January, presumably to continue epic composition.

The motif of “disclaiming divine inspiration” has famous parallels in the opening lines of Propertius’ second book (2.1.1–4) and Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*

92 On the Callimachean allusions, see Thomas (1983); Newlands (1991); Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2007).

93 Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 7.37–40: *nunc age . . . Erato . . . exordia pugnae*.

94 See Newlands (1991) 451, (2002) 4.

95 Van Dam (1984) 290.

96 Johannsen (2006) 308–13.

(1.25–9).⁹⁷ Propertius rejects traditional inspiration in favor of his *puella*: *non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo: / ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit* (“these things Calliope does not sing to me, nor Apollo: my girl herself inspires my genius,” 2.1.3–4). This disavowal is however both provocative and disingenuous at a number of levels. Cynthian Apollo is replaced by Cynthia herself in a poem that constructs her in terms of Callimachean (and Philetan) poetics.⁹⁸ Apollo is an important figure of inspiration elsewhere in Propertius, as is Calliope (1.2.27–8; 3.2.16; 3.3.37–8, 51).⁹⁹ Ovid, in a similarly tendentious manner, replaces the traditional inspirational deities (here with special reference to Callimachus and Hesiod) with his own experience in an ironic bid for didactic credibility: *non ego, Phoebe, datas a te mihi mentiar artes . . . nec mihi sunt uisae Clio Clisque sorores / seruanti pecudes uallibus, Ascra, tuis; / usus opus mouet hoc: uati parete perito* (“I shall not falsely claim, Phoebus, that my *Ars* was given to me by you . . . nor were Clio and Clio’s sisters seen by me while I was watching my flocks in your valleys, Ascra; experience impels this work: obey the practiced poet,” *Ars Am.* 1.25–9; cf. 3.789–92). Ovid’s repudiation of inspiration is belied by his use of the traditional terms *mouet* and *uati*.¹⁰⁰ In the following line he invokes Venus: *coeptis, mater Amoris, ades* (“mother of Amor, assist my undertakings,” 30), and Erato and Apollo both appear in the next book (2.15–18, 493–510).¹⁰¹ Similarly, when Statius rejects the traditional deities of poetry associated with his epics, he draws attention through contrast to his new poetic departure. As an epic poet he still has access to these sources of inspiration, but is setting them temporarily aside for poetry in a lighter vein and smaller scale.

Silvae 1.5 expands an epigrammatic ekphrastic description into an encomium of Claudius Etruscus’ new baths. In the long proem (occupying 30 of the poem’s 65 lines) Statius embarks on a (humorously) exhaustive negative enumeration of the traditional forms of divine poetic inspiration:

Non Helicon graui pulsat chelys enthea plectro
nec lassata uoco totiens mihi numina Musas;
et te, Phoebe, choris et te dimittimus, Euhan;

97 Race (1982) 138, 147, classifies both of these passages as priamels, but does not include Statian examples. Cf. *Pers. prol.*

98 Hinds (1987b) 12; cf. Miller (1986); *Prop.* 1.2.27–8.

99 On the complexities of the Propertian Apollo, see Miller (2009) *passim*.

100 Deremetz (1995) 378.

101 La Penna (1979); Miller (1983), (1986); Casali (1997).

tu quoque muta ferae, uolucer Tegeae, sonorae
terga premas: alios poscunt mea carmina coetus.

SILV. 1.5.1–5

My lyre does not in frenzy strike Helicon with weighty quill nor do I invoke the Muses, deities so often worn out by me. And you, Phoebus, I dismiss from the choruses, and you, Euan. You too winged Tegean, hide in silence the shell of the sonorous beast. My poem asks for other bands.

Instead Statius invokes Naiads and Vulcan (6–8), appropriate deities to celebrate Etruscus' splendid new baths. The banished sources of poetic influences are again specifically associated with the elevated and martial themes of the *Thebaid*.¹⁰² Statius distances his current poetics and theme from his epic (*paulum arma nocentia, Thebae, / ponite*, "Thebes, relinquish for a while harmful arms," 8–9); this is to be a *carmen molle* ("gentle song," 29).¹⁰³ Statius characterizes himself as an epic poet at play in a place of leisure: Clio, his Muse at the opening of the *Thebaid*, is to take a short break (*paulum*, 8) in a lighter vein (*Clio mea ludit Etrusco*, "my Clio sports for Etruscus," 14), adopting the erotic lyric guise of Horace's *Musa procax* in his *recusatio* at *Odes* 2.1.37–40.¹⁰⁴ In *Silvae* 1.5 Statius makes ingenious use of Callimachean "poetics of exclusion" for his own encomiastic purposes, both literary and ethical. The Alexandrian "rejection of the grandiose and elaborate and the preference for simplicity is transferred . . . to inspiration" (*satis*, 8), while Statius elaborates on his "incomparably rich and ornate setting."¹⁰⁵ In this way Statius constructs "a new, distinct poetics paradoxically uniting the tenets of Callimachean refinement with epicizing grandeur."¹⁰⁶ The poetics of exclusion and selectivity which introduce the poem are paralleled by Etruscus' discerning selection of marbles.¹⁰⁷

Silvae 2.3, a poem about Statius' patron Atedius Melior's oddly shaped plane tree, shares a number of features with 1.5, but more closely conforms to Callimachean ideals. The poem's aetiological and erotic nature has clear

102 Cf. Newlands (2002) 213–14, (2009) 390 on the important roles of Apollo, Bacchus, and Mercury in the *Thebaid*, (2009b) 390 on the exclusion of political themes.

103 Harmful Naiads are also excluded at 19–20.

104 A. Hardie (1983) 135; Newlands (2002) 217–19; Georgacopoulou (2005) 183–4; Marshall (2008) 615–16. Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 4.2.33, Stat. *Silv.* 1.4.36, Ov. *Met.* 10.150–2.

105 A. Hardie (1983) 134; see also Newlands (2002) 199–226.

106 Newlands (2002) 202; see also Gibson (2006); Rühl (2006) 253; van Dam (2006).

107 A. Hardie (1983) 133.

affinities with Hellenistic poetry, erotic elegy, and episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but also, as Statius states in the preface to book 2, with the epigrammatic tradition: *leues libellos quasi epigrammatis loco scriptos* ("slight poems written, as it were, like epigrams," 2 *praef.* 15–16). At the beginning of the poem, Apollo is again dismissed as too elevated for the current project: *quid Phoebum tam parva rogem?* ("why should I invoke Phoebus for such trifles?", 2.3.6). Statius instead invokes Naiads and Fauns (who match the *stili facilitas* announced in 2 *praef.* 16) for an *aetion*: *uos dicite causas, / Naides, et faciles (satis est) date carmina, Fauni* ("you, Naiads, tell the causes, and obliging Fauns (you are sufficient), give me songs," 6–7). The evocation of these rustic deities suits a poem about Pan and a nymph and the pseudo-bucolic setting of Melior's garden, a *rus in urbe*.¹⁰⁸ The rejection of Apollo for an *aetion* (*causas*, 6), however, is a surprising reversal. In Propertius 3.3, the Callimachean "warning Apollo" and Calliope turn Propertius away from epic themes (*quis te / carminis heroi tangere iussit opus?*, "who bid you touch a work of heroic song?", 15–16) in similarly negative enumeration (17, 22, 40–2), enjoining him to stay true to his *parua . . . ora* ("small mouth," 5).

Apollo, the traditional god of poetry, is dismissed in all Statius' divine recusals, as are the Muses, both of whom appear traditionally in elegiac *recusationes*, where they usually assist in the rejection of grand themes for lesser. This would seem to confirm the increasing associations of the Statian Apollo with lofty epic poetry and encomium.¹⁰⁹ In *Silvae* 4.2 Apollo's association with elevated poetry is underlined when he appears singing a gigantomachy (*Pallenaeos Phoebum laudare triumphos*, "Phoebus praises the Pallene triumphs," 56), as he does also at *Thebaid* 6.358–9. In *Silvae* 4.6, a Horatian *sermo*, Statius relaxes from epic composition (*Phoeboque leuatum / pectora*, "my heart lightened of Phoebus," 1–2) and is receptive to a sympotic invitation from his patron Novius Vindex.¹¹⁰ In *Silvae* 4.4.95–6, in a reversal of his usual practice in elegy, Apollo plays again an unusual role in a *recusatio* by summoning the poet from mythological epic to treat the *arma . . . maiora* of Domitian.¹¹¹ In *Silvae* 5.1 Apollo is invoked in a poem for Statius' patron, the imperial freedman T. Flavius Abascantus, chief official in charge of the imperial correspondence (*ab epistulis*): *modo dexter Apollo / quique uenit iuncto mihi semper Apolline Caesar / adnuat* ("provided that favorable Apollo approves, and Caesar, who

108 For nymphs and Pan as inspirers of bucolic, see Theoc. *Id.* 1.141, 7.91–3; Verg. *Ecl.* 2.31–3, 7.21; A. Hardie (1983) 135.

109 See Armstrong (2004) on elegiac sidelining of Apollo.

110 Nauta (2008) 171.

111 A. Hardie (1983) 167; Coleman (1988) *ad loc.*

always comes to me in company with Apollo," 13–15).¹¹² Apollo is also invoked, along with other traditional sources of poetic inspiration (Muses, Mercury, poetic fountains, Bacchus, Calliope), in Statius' two poems for fellow poets, *Silvae* 1.2, celebrating his patron Arruntius Stella's wedding, and 2.7, on the poet Lucan.¹¹³

In *Silvae* 1.4, which celebrates the recovery of the politician and orator Rutilius Gallicus, perhaps Statius' most eminent dedicatee,¹¹⁴ Statius' rejection of divine inspiration serves instead as an "obsequious gesture" to indicate his preference for the favor of his powerful friend as a source of inspiration.¹¹⁵ Statius declares that he will not invoke Phoebus, Muses (with Athena), Mercury, or Bacchus (19–21), but rather Rutilius Gallicus himself: *ipse ueni uiresque nouas animumque ministra / qui caneris* ("you yourself, who are my theme, come and supply new strength and spirit," 22–3). As Henderson suggests, the invocation rewrites in poetic/cultic terms Gallicus' performance of his duties as an imperial servant.¹¹⁶ The strategy recalls especially Lucan's prologue, which rejected divine inspiration in favor of Nero: *tu satis ad uires Romana in carmina dandas* ("you are more than enough to supply strength for Roman songs," Luc. 1.66). In 1.4 the qualification of the rejected Muses as *Aonias diuas* (20) and the periphrasis of *Dirces alumnus* for Bacchus (21; cf. *Theb.* 1.38) suggest the rejected sources of inspiration are again associated with Statius' epic *Thebaid*. Statius will drink *largos . . . haustus* ("generous draughts," 27) from Gallicus' fount of *maius / eloquium* ("greater eloquence," 34–5), but his poetry will remain true to Callimachean principles of refinement (*tenuiore lyra*, "a slighter lyre," 36; *riui minores*, "lesser streams," 38; *cumba minor*, "small skiff," 121). Statius' claim that without Apollo he is mute (19) is humorously confirmed when the dismissed Apollo actually appears in the poem and hymns Gallicus' origins and military victories (57–105).

The strategy of complimenting a powerful patron by associating him with poetic inspiration is given a particular slant with the poet's claim of *aporia*. In *Silvae* 4.7, Statius' inspiration for the *Achilleid* falters without the company

112 For joint invocations of Apollo and emperor, cf. Man. 1.7–22, Calp. *Ecl.* 4.87, V. Fl. 1.5–21; see Gibson (2006) *ad Silv.* 5.1.14. On Domitian's political links with Apollo, see Newlands (2009a) 364–5.

113 *Silv.* 1.2.1–23, 247–59 (Apollo, Muses, Elegy, Venus, Bacchus, Mercury); 2.7.1–11 (Mercury, Bacchus, Apollo, Muses). At 2.7.19–23 the Muses are asked for inspiration: *fauete, Musae*; see Newlands (201b) *ad loc.*

114 See Nauta (2002) 206–10.

115 White (1995) 20; Rosati (2002a) 245.

116 Henderson (1998a) 54.

of his patron Vibius Maximus: *torpor est nostris sine te Camenis* (“without you my Muses are sluggish,” 21).¹¹⁷ In *Silvae* 5.3 Statius’ rejection of the usual sources of poetic inspiration (Phoebus, Bacchus, Muses, 3–18) is motivated by the death of his father, who is instead invoked to aid him in singing a song of lament: *Ipse malas uires et lamentabile carmen / Elysio de fonte mihi pulsumque sinistrae / da, genitor praedocte, lyrae* (“do you yourself, most learned father, grant me from the Elysian spring a distressing potency, a song of lamentation, and the striking of an ill-omened lyre,” 1–3; cf. 28). The silence of Calliope and the Muses (14–16) represents Statius’ “inability” to write poetry in response to his suffering (cf. Catull. 65.1–4).

Silvae 4.7 is Statius’ only poem in sapphics, and, to draw attention to this metrical and generic innovation, he invokes Pindar to sanction his novel lyric composition, after a *recusatio* of epic addressed to Erato:

Iam diu lato spatiata¹¹⁸ campo
 fortis heroos, Erato, labores
 differ atque ingens opus in minores
 contrahe gyros,
 tuque, regnator lyricae cohortis,
 da noui paulum mihi iura plectri,
 si tuas cantu Latio sacraui,
 Pindare, Thebas

SILV. 4.7.1–8

For a long time, bold Erato, you have ranged the broad plain; postpone now heroic labors and confine your huge work to narrower circuits. And do you, Pindar, ruler of the lyric band, grant me awhile authority over a novel plectrum, if I have sanctified your Thebes in Latin song.

Erato, here associated with epic, is asked for a temporary (*paulum*, 6) change to a lighter genre: *Maximo carmen tenuare tempto* (“I am trying to refine my song for Maximus,” 9).¹¹⁹ The invocation of Erato recalls her invocations in the epics of Apollonius and Vergil and lines 3–4 directly reverse *Aeneid* 7.45 (*maius opus moueo*, “I am commencing a greater work”). Erato’s associations with love poetry (cf. Ov. *Ars Am.* 2.16, *Fast.* 4.195–6; Ap. Rhod. 3.1–4) motivate

117 On *sine te* and inspiration, see Coleman (1988) *ad loc.*; cf. *Silv.* 5.3.5 (with Gibson [2006] *ad loc.*), Lucr. 1.22–3, Verg. *G.* 3.42, Prop. 2.30.40.

118 Coleman (1988) *ad loc.* defends the manuscript variant *spatiata* over *sociata* and *satiata*.

119 See Coleman (1988) *ad loc.* for the characteristic wordplay in *Maximo . . . tenuare*.

her summons in *Silvae* 1.2.49, an *epithalamium*,¹²⁰ and Statius' requirement of a myrtle garland at 4.7.10–11 underlines her link with Venus here. Statius calls upon Erato as an epic Muse with an Alexandrian pedigree,¹²¹ whose poetic associations are appropriate for his current epic project, the *Achilleid*.¹²² *Silvae* 4.7 is indebted to Horace's sapphic ode 4.2, a similarly encomiastic poem, which evokes the Pindaric model in a disavowal of the grand style (1–32).¹²³ The address to Vibius Maximus in the third stanza implicates Statius' patron in the invocation and emphasizes his importance to Statius' epic poetic composition.¹²⁴ The poem requests Vibius' return to Rome so that Statius can recommence composition of his *Achilleid* with his guidance (*te fido monitore*, "with you as faithful advisor," 25; cf. 21–4); the meter of the poem is proof of the need of Vibius' inspiration.¹²⁵

It is interesting to observe also that Statius does not include poetic invocations of inspiring deities in any of his poems for Domitian (1.1, 1.6, 4.1–3). Nauta suggests that such an invocation "presumably would create a conflict of hierarchy between them and the Emperor."¹²⁶ Replacing such invocations are instead apostrophes to the Emperor (1.1.15) and internal mythological characters who provide divine or quasi-divine authority for Statius' praise poetry.¹²⁷ In the preface to *Silvae* 4 Statius claims: *reor equidem aliter quam inuocato numine maximi imperatoris nullum opusculum meum coepisse* ("I do not actually think that I have begun any of my little pieces without invoking the divinity of our great emperor," 4 *praef.* 2–3). However, Domitian is invoked as an inspiring deity with Apollo only in *Silvae* 5.1.13–15, a poem honoring Priscilla, the deceased wife of Statius' patron Abascantus. The emperor's presence here elevates Statius' praise, but reveals both the poet's and patron's reliance on imperial favor; Apollo is not an independent inspirational deity but is always linked with Caesar (*quique uenit iuncto mihi semper Apolline Caesar*, "Caesar, who always comes to me in company with Apollo," 14).¹²⁸

120 See Hersch (2007) 199–201 on Erato as Apollonian in *Silv.* 1.2.46–9.

121 Thomas (2004) 140.

122 See Coleman (1988) *ad* 4.7.2; Barchiesi (1996) 59–60.

123 On the "paradoxical intent" of Horace's disavowal of Pindaric style in *Carm.* 4.2, see Davis (1991) 134–7.

124 O'Sullivan (2008) 30.

125 Rühl (2006) 225.

126 Nauta (2008) 145.

127 1.1 (*lacus Curtius*), 4.1 (Janus), 4.23 (Vulturnus and the Sibyl); see Coleman (1999).

128 A. Hardie (1983) 185–7; Rosati (2002a) 246–8.

The *Silvae*: Poetics of Impromptu and Cultural Consumption

Gianpiero Rosati

A Fluid, Warm Poetry: Callimachus Repudiated

The epistolary preface to the first book of the *Silvae* immediately focuses on the nature of this new kind of poetry, so different from the *Thebaid*, which Statius is inaugurating.¹ While his great epic-mythological poem did not need any justifications (apart from those which motivated the postponement of a poem to celebrate the achievements of Domitian: *Theb.* 1.17–33), the case of the *Silvae* was different, as this genre was clearly less important, and was completely without any tradition to hark back to:

Diu multumque dubitaui, Stella iuuenis optime et in studiis nostris eminentissime, qua parte [et] uoluisti, an hos libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi uoluptate fluxerunt, cum singuli de sinu meo pro<dierint>, congregatos ipse dimitterem. quid enim <opus eo tempore hos> quoque auctoritate editionis onerari, quo adhuc pro Thebaide mea, quamuis me reliquerit, timeo? sed et Culicem legimus et Batrachomachiam etiam agnoscimus, nec quisquam est illustrium poetarum qui non aliquid operibus suis stilo remissiore praeluserit. quid quod haec serum erat continere, cum illa uos certe quorum honori data sunt haberetis?

SILV. 1 PRAEF. 1–12²

- 1 The first three books of the work were probably published together in 93 CE (the year after the publication of the *Thebaid*), and consequently the preface to the first book acted as an introduction to the whole collection: for data and references, cf. Newlands (2009b) 229. Great attention has recently been dedicated to the *praefationes*, in line with the new critical fortunes of the *Silvae*: cf. at least Nauta (2002) 280–4 *et passim*; Newlands (2002) 32–6, (2009a); Johannsen (2006); Pagán (2010).
- 2 Citations of Statius are from Shackleton Bailey (2003).

A long time and a great deal I hesitated, Stella, my fine young man, distinguished as you wished to be in my area of literary pursuits, as to whether I should collect these little pieces, which poured out of me in the heat of the moment, and with a kind of pleasurable haste, <springing> from my breast one at time, and send them out myself. For why <should they too> be burdened with the authority of publication <at a time> when I am still afraid for my *Thebaid*, although it has left me? But we read *The Gnat* and even acknowledge *The Battle of Frogs and Mice*, nor has there been any illustrious poet who hasn't preluded his major works with something in a more relaxed style. Moreover, wasn't it too late to hold them back, since of course you and the others in whose honor they had been produced already had them?

The discourse addressed to Stella³ immediately raises the problem of the publication of these texts, composed separately, for single social occasions. The difficult decision to publish them was taken by their author, who proclaims his embarrassment and hesitation at allowing declaredly "secondary" texts to circulate with an official hallmark. However, in alluding to the similar doubts about the advisability of publishing a work on the figure of the ideal orator that are expressed by Cicero in the *incipit* of the *Orator* (*Vtrum difficilium aut maius esset negare tibi saepius idem roganti an efficere id quod rogares diu multumque, Brute, dubitavi*, "a long time and a great deal I hesitated, Brutus, as to which course would be more difficult or more important—to deny your oft-repeated request, or to do what you were asking," Cic. *Orat.* 1), Statius effectively gives dignity to his new work (even if he apparently continues to belittle it), and also to the critical problem of poetics, which he confronts.⁴

Besides Cicero, there is another important intertext that throws light on Statius' intentions. This is the last of Horace's *Epistulae*, which acts as the

3 As the addressee of the second poem of the book, after the initial one whose honorary subject and addressee is Domitian (whose involvement as the addressee of a collection of poems of a minor genre might appear to be an act of *outrance*), and also as a poet, Stella is the ideal interlocutor for a programmatic-poetological kind of discourse. As regards the principle governing the choice of addressees of *praefationes*, cf. Nauta (2002) 375–6.

4 Cf. again Newlands (2009b) 230. The polemical nature of the prefaces seems to be implicitly confirmed by Martial's reference (2 *praef.* 4–5) to the aggressive prologues of ancient Roman comedy (Newlands [2011b] 57).

volume's "back cover":⁵ here, too, the author is hesitant, or even opposed to the idea of publication:

Vortumnum Ianumque, liber, spectare uideris,
 scilicet ut prostes Sosiorum pumice mundus;
 odisti clauis et grata sigilla pudico,
 paucis ostendi gemis et communia laudas,
 non ita nutritus: fuge quo descendere gestis.
 non erit emissio reditus tibi. "quid miser egi?
 quid uolui?" dices, ubi quid te laeserit; et scis
 in breue te cogi, cum plenus languet amator.

HOR. *EPIST.* 1.20.1–8

You seem, my book, to be looking eagerly toward Vertumnus and Janus; you're clearly longing to go on sale neatly smoothed by the pumice of the Sosii. You hate the keys and seals that are dear to the reserved; you groan at being shown to few, you praise a life in public, though you weren't brought up that way. Run off where you're so eager to go: once you're let out, there's no returning. "What, alas, have I done? What did I want?" you will say, when something hurts you, and you find yourself stuffed into a corner, when your sated lover's interest droops.

As Horace warns the *liber* about the risks of its impatience in wanting to be let out (*emisso*, 1.20.6),⁶ so also Statius hesitates to "send out" (*dimittere*, *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 5) his booklet, and only does so with the accompaniment of a preface which aims to free its progress from the traps and obstacles that hostile critics are preparing for it. The youthful exuberance of Horace's *liber-puer* (*descendere gestis*, "you're so eager to go," 1.20.5) is analogous to the impetus of the *subitus calor* and the *festinandi uoluptas* which gave life to Statius' compositions (1 *praef.* 3–4), causing them to flow from the heart of the poet (who finally decides that he cannot, or will not, hold them back [*continere*, 11]); but also the critical taboo that Statius hesitates to violate is the same, even if he does not indicate it expressly as Horace had done. The exclusive aesthetics of Callimachean tradition (*paucis ostendi gemis et communia laudas*, "you groan at being shown to few, you praise a life in public," 1.20.4)⁷ seems not to leave

5 Cf. Rosati (2013) 86.

6 A trace of Horace's personification of the book seems to be observable in Statius' personification of the *Thebaid* (*quamuis me reliquerit*, *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 6–7).

7 Cf. Oliensis (1995) 217.

any space for a kind of poetry like that of the *Silvae*, which is undoubtedly too ecumenical in its horizons, and linked with the extempore occasion that inspired it.

Statius justifies his decision in two ways. First, he invokes the precedent of great models, in fact the greatest, Homer and Vergil, who couple their choice of the epic genre with more modest projects (for them, however, as a preliminary phase of a rising career).⁸ Second, he notes the impossibility of “holding back” (*continere*) the public diffusion of texts which have already had a first “publication” on the occasion of the social event that gave rise to them, and which, Statius implies, have subsequently been circulated by the addressees, who were evidently gratified by being the subjects of the poems. His hand, Statius tells the reader, has thus been forced, and indeed, publication was a way of regaining control over a text which would otherwise be destined to enjoy a circulation exposed to the vagaries of chance or abuse.⁹

Thus, what the epistolary preface thematizes is the “double nature” of the poem.¹⁰ In its origin, dictated by the original occasion, it finds its first addressee, directly and immediately, in the patron/dedicatee, and maybe also his guests. Later, when published in a volume, it finds its second addressee, who is the generic reader,¹¹ the one for whom the Callimachean option remains an unavoidable requisite: the kind of poetics suited to the former addressee (the *calor* of immediacy) may not meet the expectations of the poet’s habitual readers, who are far more demanding of *limae labor*, or it may open itself to the criticisms of prejudiced denigrators or rivals:

sed apud ceteros necesse est multum illis pereat ex uenia, cum amiserint
quam solam habuerunt gratiam celeritatis. nullum enim ex illis biduo
longius tractum, quaedam et in singulis diebus effusa. quam timeo ne
uerum istuc uersus quoque ipsi de se probent!

SILV. 1 PRAEF. 12–15

8 Statius is clearly afraid here that if he publishes the *Silvae* he will compromise his reputation as a great epic poet, which is what he prizes above all.

9 On the problem of the “stability” that a text finds only in the written form, and indeed, in the book-object, cf. Farrell (2009).

10 On this duality, see also Roman, pp. 444–61 in this volume.

11 Something analogous happens in oratory, where a divarication, or tension, may be created between the oration that is the object of the *actio* and the one that is subsequently written down (a synthesis in Narducci [1997]).

But with the other people much of the indulgence given my poems at first has necessarily disappeared, since they have lost the only charm they had—celerity. For none of them dragged on longer than two days, some even poured out in a single day. How I fear that the very lines will prove that fact about themselves!

It is this second type of reader (*ceteros*)¹² whose judgment the author fears, and whose indulgence (*uenia*) he invokes, evidently for the lack of *lima*, formal care, and “decanting” over a period of time, which this occasional, hasty poetry does not allow (it is no chance that the two concepts are interdependent in Hor. *Ars P.* 291: *limae labor et mora*, “the work and delay of the file”).¹³ To make up for this formal deficit, though, Statius exalts *gratia celeritatis*, the pleasure of speedy improvisation:¹⁴ indeed, it is on this pleasure that he dwells, pretending to be worried that his compositions may reveal the defects of a premature birth.¹⁵

But as the *Silvae* are an ambiguous literary genre (destined first for an immediate addressee and then for a generic reader), so the epistle is, in its own way, a “strabismic” text that looks two ways: formally, it is directed to an addressee, but it also speaks to others, to readers and also to critics and denigrators. The discourse insists on the occasion that gave rise to each single poem, and the speed of their composition. In brief, what strikes us is the shift of focus: instead of justifying speed as a supposed defect, Statius praises it as a virtue, and

12 The same people indicated in the same way also in *Silv.* 2 *praef.* 11; cf. Johannsen (2006) 353–4.

13 Cf. also Hor. *Ars P.* 293: *multa dies et multa litura coercuit* (“[the poem which] many days and much erasing has corrected”), with Brink (1971) *ad loc.* on the rhetorical lexis of the control of an excessively “fluid” style (e.g., Cic. *Brut.* 316: *ut nimis redundantis nos et supra fluentis iuuenili quadam dicendi impunitate et licentia reprimeret et quasi extra ripas diffluentis coaceret*, “to contain . . . the redundancy and excess of my style, which was stained by a youthful impetuosity and lack of restraint, and to check it so to speak from overflowing its banks”).

14 As Nauta (2002) 251 correctly observes, rather than true improvisation (as we shall nevertheless continue to call it in these pages), instantly composed, we should, strictly speaking, define it as “fast” or “hasty writing,” because Statius composes his texts all at one go, but this may vary between the duration of a dinner and up to two days. On this subject, cf. also Rühl (2006) 111–12.

15 On this “rhetoric of depreciation,” cf. Newlands (2002) 33. In reality, as has often been observed, the formal care of the *Silvae* is not at all deficient, but Statius’ anxiety regards the criticisms to which the *celeritas* of composition-publication may lend itself.

obstinately rebuts, case by case, any malicious critics who may be skeptical about the truth of his affirmations on the improvised nature of his composition:

primus libellus sacrosanctum habet testem: sumendum enim erat “a Ioue principium.” centum hos uersus, quos in ecum maximum feci, indulgentissimo imperatori postero die quam dedicauerat opus, tradere ausus sum. “potuisti illud”—dicet aliquis—“et ante uidisse.” respondebis illi tu, Stella carissime, qui epithalamium tuum, quod mihi iniunxeras, scis biduo scriptum: audacter mehercules, sed ter centum tamen hexametros habet et fortasse tu pro collega mentieris. Manilius certe Vopiscus, uir eruditissimus et qui praecipue uindicat a situ litteras iam paene fugientes, solet ultro quoque nomine meo gloriari uillam Tiburtinam suam descriptam a nobis uno die. sequitur libellus Rutilio Gallico conualescenti dedicatus, de quo nihil dico, ne uidear defuncti testis occasione mentiri. nam Claudii Etrusci testimonium donandum est, qui balneolum a me suum intra moram cenae recepit. in fine sunt kalendae Decembres, quibus utique credetur: noctem enim illam felicissimam et uoluptatibus publicis inexpertam . . .

SILV. 1 PRAEF. 16–33

The first poem has a consecrated witness: I had to follow the rule “from Jove my beginning.” These hundred lines which I composed on the Great Horse I was bold to offer to our most indulgent Emperor the very day after the monument had been dedicated. “You could,” someone will say, “have seen it beforehand.” You will answer him, my dearest Stella, you who know that your Wedding Poem, which you commissioned, was written in two days—a bold claim indeed, and after all it has three hundred hexameters, and perhaps you will lie for a colleague. To be sure, Manilius Vopiscus, a very learned man and one in particular who is rescuing our now almost vanishing literature from neglect, likes to boast in my name, and spontaneously, that my description of his villa at Tibur was composed in a single day. Next comes the piece dedicated to Rutilius Gallicus on his recovery from illness. About it I say nothing, lest I may be thought to be taking advantage of the death of my witness to lie. As for Claudius Etruscus’ testimony, I must waive it: he received his “Bath” from me within the space of a dinner. At the end come the “Kalends of December.” They at least will be believed, for that very happy night, unprecedented among public delights . . .

Thus the problem is not the demanding Callimacheans: what was introduced as a line of defense, the exorcism of a fear (*quam timeo ne . . .*, “how I fear that . . .”, 1 *praef.* 14), in reality proves to be a pretext for passing, surprisingly, to the attack, to a stubborn claim of possessing the poetic skill and professional ability to compose poetry extempore.¹⁶ It is this ability which, according to Statius, is challenged by some denigrator (or probably a rival, perhaps in the same field),¹⁷ and which he proudly lays claim to and exalts (as he explicitly declares: *nec nunc eam apud te iacto qui nosti, sed et ceteris indico*, “and I am not now boasting that to you, who know, but I am pointing it out to the others,” 2 *praef.* 10–11), indicating as witnesses and sponsors leading figures of the Flavian social elite, including the emperor; those same characters, clearly, that the poet mentions as satisfied patrons, to whom he looks for possible future commissions.

The point which Statius cares about most, on which the conflict-rivalry with his critics hinges, is his capacity to improvise;¹⁸ and it is clear that this celebration of improvisation implies conflict with one of the basic principles of Callimacheanism, like the *nonum prematur in annum* (“put away [your writings] for nine years,” Hor. *Ars* 388), a principle which Statius himself declared he had scrupulously followed in the patient work of polishing up the *Thebaid* (*nostra* / *Thebais multa cruciata lima*, “my *Thebaid*, tortured by much filing,” *Silv.* 4.7.25–6; *o mihi bisseos multum uigilata per annos*, / *Thebai*, “my *Thebaid*, on whom I have spent twelve wakeful years,” *Theb.* 12.811–12; *longi tu sola laboris* / *conscia, cumque tuis creuit mea Thebais annis*, “only you witnessed my long labor, and my *Thebaid* grew along with your years,” *Silv.* 3.5.35–6).¹⁹ Statius

16 But note also how Statius shrewdly transfers the vaunting of his own ability to another voice, that of Manilius Vopiscus, addressee of *Silv.* 1.3: *solet ultro quoque nomine meo gloriari uillam Tiburtinam suam descriptam a nobis uno die* (“[Manilius Vopiscus] likes to boast in my name, and spontaneously, that my description of his villa at Tibur was written in a single day,” *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 26–7), where, not by chance, *ultro* and *nomine meo* are somewhat contradictory.

17 Coleman (1988) 59 advances the hypothesis that in seeing Statius composing “short” texts in a context of patronage analogous to his own, Martial may have considered that he “was poaching Martial’s own public.”

18 “Statius appears to be obsessed with time”: Pagán (2010) 196. The theme is to return again in the epistolary prefaces to books 2 (as we shall see below) and 3 (*multos ex illis in sinu tuo subito natos*, “many of them came suddenly to birth on your lap,” 3 *praef.* 3–4; *statim ut uideram, his uersibus adoraui*, “as soon as I saw . . . I paid him homage with these verses,” 10–11); in the preface to book 4, Statius alludes more generally to the hostile criticisms that were evidently made of this aspect (4 *praef.* 26–35; see below, p. 66).

19 More in van Dam (1984) 58.

does not argue against Callimacheanism openly, and indeed he clearly pays tribute to it in his most important work, where he claims for himself the role of the new Vergil and poet laureate of the Flavian regime; but there are clear signs that this is what he really cares about, namely, that he wants to escape from the tyranny of the aesthetics he himself had followed as an epic poet, to which the critics of his new role as occasional poet want to nail him down.

The attack on the imperatives of Callimacheanism is made indirectly and discreetly, and can be seen first of all in the choice of certain specific semantic fields associated with well-known formulations that Horace had used. For Horace, Lucilius is the canonical Roman example of sloppy poetry, in need of *labor limae*: he is the butt of the vignette of the *uitiosus* poet who improvises nonchalantly, turning out hundreds of verses:

nam fuit hoc uitiosus: in hora saepe ducentos,
ut magnum, uersus dictabat stans pede in uno.
cum flueret lutulentus . . .

HOR. SAT. 1.4.9–11²⁰

In this indeed his defect lay: often, as though a great exploit, he would dictate two hundred lines in an hour while standing on one foot. As he flowed muddily on . . .

It is not by chance that Horace's unit of measurement for bad poetry, the *hundreds* of verses, return in the claim that Statius makes for his own improvisatory ability (*centum hos uersus, quos in ecum maximum feci*, "these hundred lines which I composed on the Great Horse," *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 17–18; *ter centum*²¹ . . . *hexametros habet*, "it has three hundred hexameters," 23). This Statius is not afraid

20 Cf. also Hor. Sat. 1.10.56–61: *quid uetat et nosmet Lucili scripta legentis / quaerere, num illius, num rerum dura negarit / uersiculos natura magis factos et euntis / mollius ac si quis pedibus quid claudere senis, / hoc tantum contentus, amet scripsisse ducentos / ante cibum uersus, totidem cenatus . . .* ("and what forbids us, too, as we read Lucilius' writings, from asking ourselves whether it was his own genius, or the harsh nature of his themes, which denied him verses more finished and easier flowing than someone content simply to enclose something in six feet and take delight in having written two hundred verses before dinner and two hundred afterward").

21 The text of the manuscript tradition (*tantum*) has rightly been corrected by the best recent editions (Courtney [1992], Shackleton Bailey [2003] 1), who adopt the conjecture of Elter (in Vollmer [1898]), in the wake of Domizio Calderini: cf. Håkanson (1969) 19, who connects the two passages, linked by the word *centum* ("*ter centum hexametros* in two days, a still more remarkable achievement").

to challenge the taboo of the “torrential” poet, for he does not hesitate to award himself another characteristic that Horace attributes to Lucilius. Following a famous programmatic image used by Callimachus to condemn torrential poetry that lacks any restraint or control (*Hymn* 2.108–12), Horace compares Lucilius to a muddy river: *cum flueret lutulentus* (*Sat.* 1.4.11).²² Statius takes up the liquid metaphor to describe his own flair for composing on the spur of the moment, his fluid inspiration: *hos libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi uoluptate fluxerunt* . . . (“these little pieces, which poured out of me in the heat of the moment, and with a kind of pleasurable haste,” *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 2–4); *quaedam et in singulis diebus effusa* (“some even poured out in a single day,” 14). Rejecting the censure of Callimachus for things that flow “grossly” (which are therefore impure, as opposed to the ὀλίγη λιβίς, the perfectly uncontaminated “little drop,” *Hymn* 2.112), Statius declares his pleasure in abandoning himself to the enthusiasm of an immediate, exuberant composition, not distilled “drop by drop.”

What adds to the pleasure of the impromptu (*subito, festinandi*) is the *calor* of inspiration, an element inherent in the immediacy with which, thanks to his exuberant talent as a versifier, the poet celebrates and immortalizes the occasion, the events which trigger the creation of the individual poems. This is how he speaks of the origin of *Silvae* 2.5:

eandem exigebat stili *facilitatem* leo mansuetus, quem in amphitheatro prostratum *frigidum* erat sacratissimo imperatori ni *statim* tradere.

SILV. 2 PRAEF. 17–19

The same fluency of pen was called for by the Tame Lion laid down in the amphitheater; if I had not delivered it to our most sacred Emperor immediately, it would have turned out cold.

Immediacy (*statim*) requires a *facilitas* of style, which supports a more intense emotional involvement, and is expressed in the poet’s effusiveness and exuberant performance. This is the *calor* that inspires the poetics of the *Silvae*, and it is necessarily at odds with the formal precision of the text, that *limae labor* which would require time and detachment, a rational “coldness”²³ in contrast

22 The reference to Horace’s passage did not escape Politian’s attention: cf. Cesarini Martinelli (1978) 33. Much on this subject in the classic Wimmel (1960) 222–33.

23 The idea (which implies a pun on the dead animal: cf. Newlands [2011b] *ad* 2 *praef.* 17) is not to be interpreted solely in rhetorical terms (van Dam [1984] 60), but more in emotional terms: it is what [Longinus], *De Sublimitate* calls ψυχρόν (4.1), and what he censures,

to emotion (*festinandi uoluptas*) that involves both the poet and the protagonist of the social occasion celebrated in the text. As in the case when he has to console a friend in mourning:

huius amissi recens uulnus, ut scis, epicedio prosecutus sum adeo *festinanter* ut excusandam habuerim affectibus tuis *celeritatem*. nec nunc eam apud te iacto qui nosti, sed et ceteris indico, ne quis asperiore lima carmen examinet et a confuso scriptum et dolenti datum, cum paene superuacua sint *tarda* solacia.²⁴

SILV. 2 PRAEF. 7–13

As you know, the fresh wound of losing him was followed so hastily by my poem of consolation that I have had to apologize to your feelings for the speed of my composition. And I am not now boasting that to you, who know, but I am pointing it out to the others, lest anyone might criticize the piece with too sharp a file: it was composed by a troubled writer for a grieving recipient, since late consolations are almost superfluous.

This *facilitas* is not a Callimachean principle; Ovid demonstrates this clearly from his exile, when he explains why, in his conditions, there is no sense in dedicating himself to a *limae labor*:

quod uenit *ex facili* satis est componere nobis,
et nimis intenti causa laboris abest.

e.g., in Timaeus, as a consequence of an “insatiable passion for starting strange conceits,” including it among the emotional aspects (τῶν παθητικῶν, 3.5) of literature. Cf. also 33.4–5, where he contrasts formally impeccable poets (like Apollonius or Theocritus) with others (Homer, Archilochus, Sophocles, Pindar, etc.) who, though occasionally committing slips or mistakes, do not lose any of their greatness. In general, the idea condemns artifice and affectation (in Latin, cf., e.g., Quint. *Inst.* 4.1.77 on the *frigida* . . . *affectatio* [“cold . . . affectation”] of Ovid; see also van Hook [1917] and Lausberg [1998] 470–1); it also includes lack of fluidity in performance (cf., e.g., Cicero on the orator and jurist Juventius: *nimis ille quidem lentus in dicendo et paene frigidus* [“though much too slow and almost cold in his manner of speaking,” *Brut.* 178]).

24 In this case, the *lima* is used by the malicious reader-critic in judging Statius’ work. See the observations of Merli (2013) on the development of the metaphor of the *lima* in post-Augustan poetry, where the author transfers it to the addressee as a gesture of tribute to his literary competence. Merli (2013) 189–90 notes the significant exception of Statius, who claims the instrument for himself as a symbol of his autonomy and professional pride.

cur ego sollicita poliam mea carmina cura?
an uerear ne non adprobet illa Getes?²⁵

OV. *PONT.* 1.5.59–62

It is enough for me to compose what comes easily; I lack a motive for concentrated toil. Why should I polish my poems with anxious labor? Should I fear that the Getan not approve them?

Even poets of proven Callimachean observance may thus waive his requirements, falling back on an “easy” style, if the external circumstances (i.e., the reading public) do not call for refinement, or require the opposite. Instead of *diligentia* (*Polli mei uilla Surrentina quae sequitur debuit a me uel in honorem eloquentiae eius diligentius dici, sed amicus ignouit*, “the Surrentine villa of my friend Pollius, which comes next, deserved more careful writing, if only in homage to his eloquence; but as a friend he forgave,” *Silv.* 2 *praef.* 13–15), what may prove to be more appropriate is *facilitas*, the ability to improvise, that *ex tempore dicendi facultas* (“ability to speaking extempore”) which Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.7.1; 10.3.2) defines as an essential requisite for the performance of the good orator,²⁶ but which may also be necessary for a poet.

Already in Horace’s “archetype” of *Epistle* 1.20, a tension was implicit between his Callimachean conscience and his awareness that his interlocutors were no longer the limited circle of learned friends, but a wider, less well defined public.²⁷ And this need to come to grips with the requirements of Callimacheanism must have been increasingly felt to be unavoidable in justifying the new literary forms, as the horizon of the reading public became broader and more indiscriminate.²⁸ This is also shown by Martial, the Flavian poet who more than all others challenges the formal hierarchies consecrated by tradition, adopting a minor genre, indeed a marginal one, the epigram (*quid minus esse potest?*, “what can be lesser?”, *Mart.* 12.94.9), which thrives on the direct, immediate relationship with the general public of non-professional readers. To justify the lack of *lima*, Martial also uses Horace’s model of the discourse to the *liber*, which is impatient to “come out in public”:

sed tu ne totiens domini patiare lituras
neue notet lusus tristis harundo tuos,

25 Cf. also Ov. *Pont.* 1.5.15–20.

26 On the analogies between Quintilian’s position and the Greek rhetor Alcidas (fifth century BCE), cf. A. Hardie (1983) 78–9.

27 Cf. Citroni (1995) 254, 348–9; Oliensis (1995) 218.

28 The richest and most detailed overview on this subject is Citroni (1995).

aetherias, lasciue, cupis uolitare per auras:
i, fuge; sed poteras tutior esse domi.

MART. 1.3.9–12

Bur rather than put up with continual corrections by your master, rather than let his stern pen mark your playful lines, you are eager, mischievous book, to flit through the airs of heaven. Go on then, fly! But you might have been safer at home.

Martial's feigned hesitation in publishing his book²⁹ stems from the same need to bring into discussion the validity of that aesthetics in its basic principles, showing that Callimachean elitism is inappropriate for the taste and the cultural consumption of Flavian society.³⁰ Just as in Statius, the apparently defensive move is in reality a pretext to attack and reject the exclusive character of the dominant Callimachean postulates.³¹ From the Callimachean lessons on poetics, Martial adopts and enhances the preference for the short form, raising it to its maximum level of expressive concentration, but he rejects the excess of formal refinement and the abuse of *doctrina* (including mythological) which would exclude most of those readers who ensure the poet's striking success.

For similar reasons, we find in Statius the paradox of seeing the work of the *lima* scrupulously applied to the great epic poem (which in its very title recalled the "pompous" Antimachus, the polemical target of the Callimachean Catullus),³² while the short form of the *Silvae* was, at least outwardly, excluded from "the file's labor." Clearly it is not a question of taking Statius' words at face value. Laboring, as some scholars do, to demonstrate that those affirmations are misleading, and that on the contrary the *Silvae* are elaborate compositions, not at all sloppy, means preaching to the converted. Rather, we need to understand the implicit critical reasons that explain the poet's discourse, and the direct and indirect addressees that he is speaking to.

29 On the proemial function of this epigram, cf. Citroni (1975) 22–3.

30 Martial's refusal of the *labor limae* (cf. also 4.10.7–8), however, is based on his choice of a realistic poetics, contrary to artifice and stylistic refinement: cf. Citroni (1968) esp. 281–6; Spisak (1994); Johannsen (2006) 155.

31 Cf. most recently Merli (2013) 162–6. Quintilian, writing in the same era, discusses certain excesses of Callimacheanism, and its inapplicability to the practice of the orator (*Inst.* 10.4.3–4).

32 Cf. Catull. 95.10: *at populus tumido gaudeat Antimacho* ("but let the people delight in pompous Antimachus"). The hypothesis that Antimachus is attacked by Callimachus himself in the proem to the *Aetia* is known to have been much discussed (esp. after Cameron [1995] 263–302).

The Culture of the Immediate and the Short Form

As a recent study argues, the purpose of the epistolary *praefationes* used by Statius and Martial is to mediate the reader's response to the work that they introduce:³³ Statius' intention is clearly to forestall expected criticism and at the same time elaborate a theoretical framework to justify his choice of a genre devoid of any tradition, open to the criticism of "simplicity" and formal sloppiness, which a great poet like the author of the *Thebaid* might attract.

Many scholars have seen a tension running through Statius' *praefationes*,³⁴ which indicates a problem that effectively emerges from them, that of a complex tonality. What interests Statius, above all, is rebutting his denigrators' criticism of his decision to dedicate himself to occasional poetry; criticism which, after the publication of the first three books, had not relented at all (probably as a result of their success), as the poet himself tells us in the preface to book 4:

quare ergo plura in quarto Siluarum quam in prioribus? ne se putent aliquid egisse qui *reprehenderunt, ut audio, quod hoc stili genus edidissem*. primum superuacuum est dissuadere rem factam; deinde *multa ex illis iam domino Caesari dederam—et quanto hoc plus est quam edere!* exercere autem ioco non licet? "secreto" inquit. sed et sphaeromachia spectantes et palaris lusio admittit. nouissime, *quisquis ex meis inuitus aliquid legit, statim se profiteatur aduersum*. ita quare consilio eius accedam? in summam, nempe ego sum qui traducor; taceat et gaudeat.

SILV. 4 PRAEF. 26–35

So why are there more poems in the fourth book of the *Silvae* than in the previous ones? To keep those who have criticized me, as I am told, for publishing this kind of composition from thinking they have had any effect. First, it is a waste of time to advise against a *fait accompli*. Second, I had already given many of these poems to our Lord Caesar—and how much more is that than publication! Is there a law against practicing for

33 Johannsen (2006) analyses the function of this textual space as a "paratext" (esp. 38–45; cf. the earlier discussion of Newlands [2002] 32).

34 Cf., e.g., Coleman (1988) xxvi; Newlands (2002) 33–4; Johannsen (2006) 268; van Dam (1984) 283: "He probably means his public to take seriously rather the hidden boast in *facilitas* than a self-depreciation in *leues*." On the complex presence of Callimachus in the *Silvae*, cf. Newlands (1991), who also notes the contradiction between the choice of the short form, in line with Callimachean poetics, and a way of writing governed by *celeritas* (440).

fun? "In private," they say. Yet onlookers are allowed at both ball games and fencing matches. Finally, whoever reads something of mine reluctantly, let him declare himself my adversary; so why should I comply with his advice? In short, I am the one under fire; let him keep still and enjoy it.

The tone is even more polemical than in the past, or indeed, scornful. In answer to the narrow-minded critical arguments evidently brought by malicious colleagues or professional readers, Statius appeals to political arguments: his direct relationship with the emperor (and the authoritative *imprimatur* that may be presumed to derive from this) reveals the celebratory character of the *Silvae* which, in illustrating the lifestyle of the imperial elite, represent in effect an encomium of the entire Flavian social structure and its leader.³⁵

But this claim of political legitimation (i.e., the affirmation that he gives pleasure to the elite) does not annul the need for literary legitimation, where the point in question is that of improvisation. Several sources show that the practice of literary improvisation was widespread in the imperial age,³⁶ though it aroused resistance and disputes in the more demanding, professional spheres of readers. An improvised composition, *as such*, was considered to be of less value: in this connection, the young Martial's request for indulgence for the improvised nature of his verses accompanying the offer of his *Spectacula* to the emperor Titus is significant:

Da ueniam subitis: non displicuisse meretur,
festinat, Caesar, qui placuisse tibi.

MART. SPECT. 35³⁷

Pardon my hasty offering: he deserves not to displease you, Caesar, who rushes to please you.

The use of a form like the epigram for a work to be donated to the emperor may seem to be a disrespectful gesture.³⁸ But the haste of composition that generates improvisational texts (*subitis*) becomes astutely identified here with the

35 Cf. esp. Newlands (2002) 18–27 *et passim*; Myers (2005); Zeiner (2005).

36 On the practice and tradition of epideictic speeches there is much in A. Hardie (1983) 15–49; on the custom of improvisation, cf. Nauta (2002) 93–105 and Rühl (2006) 128–40.

37 Text is by Coleman (2006).

38 A detailed discussion in Coleman (2006) 260–2, who points out the analogous request for indulgence made by the contemporary writer of epigrams Antipater of Thessalonica

poet's impatience (*festinat*) to please the emperor; as if, in sum, the short form, instead of being improper, was the most suitable vehicle for dedicating to the service of the emperor. The *audacia* of an extempore composition, not meditated or refined, as the authority of the addressee would require, is a recurring theme. For example, a late writer of panegyrics, before offering his homage to the imperial addressee, observes that improvising before the sovereign may appear to be a sign of scanty respect for him: *neque ad aures tanti numinis quicquam nisi diu scriptum et saepe tractatum adferri oportere. nam qui apud imperatorem populi Romani dicit ex tempore, quantum sit non sentit imperium* ("Nothing should be brought to the ears of such a great divinity which has not been written for a long time and repeatedly revised. For he who extemporizes before the emperor of the Roman people has no feeling for the greatness of the empire," *Pan. Lat.* 6.1–2).

The fact is that the "immediate" composition is in a certain sense imposed by the new reality, which provides occasions to be celebrated artistically and swiftly;³⁹ because it is promptness which exalts the pleasure and emotion of those involved in the social event. This is what happens in the sphere of rhetoric (cf. Tac. *Dial.* 6.6, Quint. *Inst.* 10.6.6) but also, undoubtedly, in that of poetry.

An excellent example of an occasional poet, offered by a text of the Neronian age, is Eumolpus, who is a key figure of extemporization and contemporary literary practice in the social context illustrated by Petronius. At the moment of his entrance onto the scene, he introduces himself as a poet *non humillimi spiritus* ("of no mean inspiration," Petron. *Sat.* 83.8) and confirms his vaunted professionalism by improvising verses on every occasion or for any pretext that arises (89.1, 93.2, 109.9–10, 115.20, etc.). But the entire *Satyricon*, and above all the *Cena Trimalchionis*, is an eloquent document of the culture of the impromptu which invades the social life of the early empire: as, for example, when Trimalchio, faithful to the principle that *oportet etiam inter cenandum philologiam nosse* ("even at dinner we must not forget our culture," 39.4), presents himself as an extemporaneous poet, inspired by *kairos*:

(*Anth. Pal.* 9.93) for the booklet composed as a birthday present to his patron in a single night.

39 On the occasional framework of the *Silvae* the most specific work is Rühl (2006), who also examines the difference between the falsely occasional nature of Horace's poetry and the authentic kind of Statius' work. Just as the former does not involve composition on the spur of the moment, or a poetics of the immediate (Horace is an unrelenting Callimachean), that of the *Silvae* is real and deliberate (obviously because it is expedient and profitable for the author).

“ita” inquit Trimalchio “non oportet hunc casum sine inscriptione transire” statimque codicillos poposcit et *non diu cogitatione distorta* haec recitauit:

“quod non expectes, ex transuerso fit
et supra nos fortuna negotia curat.
quare da nobis uina Falerna, puer.”

ab hoc epigrammate coepit poetarum esse mentio . . .

PETRON. SAT. 55.2–4

“Ah,” said Trimalchio, “we must not let this event slip by without recording it.” And at once he called for paper, and after racking his brains for a moment declaimed these verses:

“What you do not look for, you get as a sideways blow,
and high over us Fortune directs our affairs.
So come, boy, hand us Falernian wine.”

This epigram gave rise to a discussion of poetry . . .

In brief, the *Satyricon* is the mirror of a “society of occasions,” which are to be celebrated artistically. But what is even more significant for us is the contradictions with which Eumolpus grapples in his role of “professional” poet: his professed Callimachean creed, as a career man of letters (*sumendae uoces a plebe semotae, ut fiat “odi profanum uulgus et arceo”*, “we must . . . adopt words remote from common speech, putting into practice ‘I hate the common mob, and hold it afar,’” 118.4),⁴⁰ clashes with the language of his impetuous, torrential inspiration (*mens . . . ingenti flumine litterarum inundata . . . plenus litteris . . . praecipitandus est liber spiritus . . . hic impetus*, “the human mind . . . submerged in the vast flood of literature . . . steeped in literature . . . the free spirit of genius should plunge . . . this effusion of mine,” 118.3–6).⁴¹ Behind the Petronian caricature the obsession that carries him away reflects the real reason for his verse-making itch, that is to say, the pressure of a patronage that demands immediate

40 On the “Horatian lesson” in Eumolpus, cf. also Labate (1995) esp. 161.

41 Cf. also Petron. Sat. 124.2: *cum haec Eumolpos ingenti uolubilitate uerborum effudisset* (“once Eumolpus poured out this monstrous deluge of words”; at the end of the *Bellum Civile*, perhaps the text written on the *ingens membrana* of 115.2).

answers, linked with the occasions of social life which lend themselves to cultural consumption.

Another important key to understanding the practice of improvisation in Flavian culture, and the problem that Statius faces, is a well-known passage of Quintilian (already pointed out by Politian), which informs us about the fashion of composing *siluae*,⁴² a kind of poetry intolerant of formal restrictions and the long time that they require:

diuersum est huic eorum uitium qui primo *decurrere* per materiam stilo quam *uelocissimo* uolunt, et sequentes *calorem* atque *impetum* ex tempore scribunt: hanc *siluam* uocant. repetunt deinde et componunt quae *effuderant*: sed uerba emendantur et numeri, manet in *rebus temere congestis* quae fuit *leuitas*. protinus ergo adhibere curam rectius erit, atque ab initio sic opus ducere ut *caelandum*, non ex integro fabricandum sit. aliquando tamen *adfectus* sequemur, in quibus fere plus *calor* quam *diligentia* ualet.

QUINT. INST. 10.3.17–18

An opposite fault of this is committed by those who prefer to make a draft of their subject as rapidly as their pen is capable, and write impromptu, following the heat and impulse of the moment. They call this their “raw material.” They then revise their outpourings and give them rhythmical structure. But while the words and the rhythms are thus corrected, the original superficiality of the hurriedly accumulated material is still there. The more correct method will be, therefore, to exercise care from the start, and shape the work from the outset in such a manner that it only needs to be chiseled into shape, not fashioned anew. Sometimes however we must follow our emotions, since warmth of feeling is generally more important than diligent craftsmanship.

On the one hand, Quintilian underlines the expediency of expressive accuracy from the first formulation of the poem, that is to say, respect for the Callimachean requisites,⁴³ but on the other, he recognizes the effectiveness

42 On the widely discussed meaning of the name, cf. above all Coleman (1988) xxii–xxiv; Nauta (2002) 252–4; Wray (2007); Bonadeo (2010) 151–3 (with ample bibliography), who thinks that a definition like “improvisations mêlées” (H. Frère) renders most appropriately the sense of the title of Statius’ work.

43 For *caelare*, “the Callimachean metaphor for poetic elaboration,” cf. Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.92: *caelatum . . . nouem Musis opus*; Brink (1982) *ad loc.*, with a rich documentation.

of the *adfectus* (“emotions”) and *calor* (“warmth of feeling”) that are linked with immediacy, compared with the cold, meticulous work of polishing.⁴⁴ The lexical and thematic analogies with Statius are very clear, and reveal the same tension that we find in his prefaces: behind the inevitable homage to a professional *diligentia* which avoids all appearance of amateurishness, there emerges a refusal of the excesses of Callimacheanism and a sensitivity to the emotions that accompany improvisation; almost a desire to reconcile respect for a high standard of quality with the informal nonchalance (*leuitas*) of the occasion giving rise to the *silua*.

Statius also lays claim to a “fluid,” “warm” poetics for the *Silvae*, which will exempt the work from the control of the *lima* and the long delays that this entails. The problem that he faces is elaborating a poetics for occasional poetry, which is not limited to the epigram (and it is clear that an affirmation like *scis a me leues libellos quasi epigrammatis loco scriptos* [“you know that my trifling booklets were written as if they were epigrams,” *Silv.* 2 *praef.* 16–17] might sound to the ears of Martial like a provocative invasion of his territory), but includes more complex, ambitious forms like his *Silvae*, more capable than the epigram of involving a public that is more exclusive, and more closely linked with the world of the court (thus allowing the poet also to carry out, by means of performance, an important social function, useful for the imperial regime).⁴⁵ In order to do this, he has to escape from the dictatorship of Callimacheanism and the pressures it exerts on a poet who is a professional, and proud to be so.

On the one hand, Statius wants to defend his professional reputation as an official poet (we may say the greatest poet alive, as he undoubtedly believes himself to be)⁴⁶ from the attacks of his colleague-enemies, or even rivals, who are interested in discrediting him, or at least in denouncing the contradiction that he grapples with.⁴⁷ But he also wishes to display and advertise another aspect of his professionalism, his talent for versifying, with a public that is less learned from a literary point of view and consequently also less demanding, that is to say, his real and also his potential patrons.

The *Silvae* document the tension that is created between the (Callimachean-Horatian) refusal of the *profanum uulgus* and the (Ovidian) openness to an

44 Against the excesses of elaboration, cf. Quintilian himself (*Inst.* 10.3.5–12).

45 Which confirms that “social diplomacy and literary criticism are key features of the prefaces” (Newlands [2009b] 231).

46 In other words, his anxiety about critical reactions to the publication of the *Thebaid* (cf. *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 6–7).

47 Substantially, the same contradiction is exposed in certain well-known, poisonous verses of Juvenal (7.82–7).

undifferentiated public, not limited to the circle of literary friends or the cultural elite.⁴⁸ In Statius, there is a sort of return to the elite, but, unlike for the Augustan poets or Catullus, the new elite is social, not cultural. This return gratifies the new elite, granting them the coveted title of cultural distinction⁴⁹ (as well as opening up a way for the poet to find new forms of private patronage). This poetry shuns forms that are too elaborate, and instead caters to addressees who demand prompt performance and rapid consumption, whose literary competence is probably exaggerated, or at least not equal to the professional standard of the poet. This openness of Statius converges with the interests of a contemporary rival poet like Martial, partly because the patrons that both of them look to are sometimes the same. However, Martial addresses a public of readers who are of a not very refined or ambitious socio-cultural level, and thus can display an attitude of complicit indifference, or open derision, towards “high” culture (especially Greek culture of a Hellenistic matrix, with its display of *doctrina*, cerebral character, and marked formal elaboration).⁵⁰ Statius however speaks to an elite clearly dominated by the prestige of that culture and by the uses that it may find also in the material culture of villa life; he thus exploits their subjection with his poetic “gifts,” which also allows him to enhance his own professional identity as a great epic poet and gain credit in his role of cultural mediator with the Greek world.⁵¹ Martial’s readers on the other hand presumably share his ironical attitude towards Greek culture.

The urgency of the new social reality, and of the cultural consumption that it requires, reveals the conflict that Statius experiences—that is to say, the contradiction ruthlessly denounced by Juvenal—between faithfulness to the great models of the past and the crude reality to which poets and men of letters must now adapt. Vergil, Horace, Maecenas, and Augustan patronage are really a far-off myth.

48 Citroni (1995) 434–5 effectively illustrates this changeover.

49 Zeiner (2005) is fundamental on this topic; but cf. also Rühl pp. 91–105 in this volume.

50 Cf. Citroni (1968) 283–6.

51 Cf. Rosati (2011) 18–9.

The Beginnings of the *Achilleid*

Randall T. Ganiban

How does one begin a poem about Achilles, the most famous of ancient warriors, celebrated in the most famous of epics, Homer's *Iliad*? This would be a daunting challenge for any classical poet, but one that Statius takes up in a playful and original way. Or perhaps it would be better to say “ways,” since Statius includes a number of episodes that individually might have provided a reasonable starting point: Thetis' appeal to Neptune for help; her disguising of Achilles on Scyros; the marshaling of the Greek armies and Ulysses' search for Achilles; the new beginning suggested by book 2. This paper will examine Statius' experimentation with starting points. I will first explore how Statius uses the prologue to present his epic's theme, scope, and position within the poetic tradition, and then investigate the various attempts of characters—particularly Thetis and Ulysses—to (in some sense) get the epic started. I will show how Statius' play with beginnings, through its intertextual dialogue with previous epic, gives voice to a new and creative perspective on the identity and story of Achilles.

The Prologue

Any discussion of beginnings in the *Achilleid* must start with the prologue in which Statius states the parameters of his poem and creates a poetic space for himself within the epic tradition:

quamquam acta uiri multum incluta cantu
Maeonio (sed plura uacant), nos ire per omnem—
sic amor est—heroa uelis Scyroque latentem
Dulichia proferre tuba nec in Hectore tracto
sistere, sed tota iuuenem deducere Troia.

ACHIL. 1.3–7

Although the hero's deeds are very famous because of Homeric song (but more are available), may you allow me to cover all of the hero (so is my desire), to bring him forth with Ulysses' trumpet as he hides on

Scyros and not to stop with Hector's dragging, but to lead the young man through all of (the war at) Troy.

Statius freely admits the greatness of Homer's *Iliad*, which had focused on Achilles' rage at the end of the Trojan war,¹ but declares that he will go beyond Homer and tell the hero's whole life (*per omnem . . . heroa*, 1.4–5).² His epic will begin with the un-Homeric episode of Ulysses' discovery of Achilles on Scyros (*Scyroque latentem / Dulicijia proferre tuba*, 5–6), continue past Hector's death (*nec in Hectore tracto / sistere*, 6–7; i.e., beyond the ending of the *Iliad*), and encompass Achilles' deeds during the entire Trojan war (*tota iuuenem deducere Troia*, 7).³ Statius also lets us know that he will not write a traditional poem. His epic will be Alexandrian and particularly Ovidian in nature, as indicated not only by the use of parenthetical comments, suggesting room in the tradition for innovation (*sed plura uacant*, 4) and the motivating force of *amor* (*sic amor est*, 5), but also by the presence of the verb *deducere*, a word endowed with great metapoetic significance from the proem of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.1–4), which gave voice to an integration of traditional epic (*perpetuum carmen*) and Alexandrian poetics (*deducite*).⁴ Statius has placed the *Achilleid* in rivalry with Homer but in alliance with Ovidian poetics.⁵

The prologue's opening line—the epic's literal beginning—had already implicitly engaged Homer and the epic tradition on such grounds: *magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti*. The epic's initial word, *magnanimus* ("great-souled"), is a compound that by its very nature picks out the elevated style of the epic genre, offering a translation of the Homeric epithet *megathummos*. In Latin poetry, it is used especially to describe heroic figures.⁶ By initiating the epic with this word, Statius endows Achilles with a defining quality of epic

1 For Statius' engagement with Homer, see Juhnke (1972) 162–72 and Taisne (2008).

2 See, e.g., Barchiesi (1996) 47.

3 As Heslin (2005) 80–2 argues, this passage might seem to violate the dicta of both Aristotle (*Poet.* 1459a–b, 1451a) and Horace (*Ars P.* 147–9) that a poet should not ploddingly retell the story of a character's life, but Statius does not quite follow through on such claims in the prologue. See, however, Delarue (2008).

4 Cf. also Verg. *Ecl.* 6.5. See discussions of these points in Barchiesi (1996) 58–9; Hinds (1998); Cowan (2005) xv–xvi; Heslin (2005) 71–8.

5 Moreover, at 1.8–13 Statius claims that the success of his first epic, the *Thebaid*, has placed him metaphorically among ancient poets who predate even Homer and the Trojan war itself. He also notes that the *Achilleid* will be a prelude to a later epic on the emperor Domitian (1.14–19). See esp. Barchiesi (1996) 49, 55–6; Hinds (1998) 97–8.

6 For example, in Latin epic *magnanimus* is used in Catullus of Minos (64.85); in Lucretius of Phaethon (5.400); in Vergil's *Aeneid* of Aeneas (e.g., 1.260), Jupiter (12.144), and heroes more

heroism. At the same time, he draws a contrast with the opening of the *Iliad*. While the *Iliad* started with *menin* (Achilles' rage) and concentrated on the hero during the final year of the Trojan war, Statius' focus on the *magnanimus* hero activates a broader conception of his character by endowing him with a representative quality of epic heroism,⁷ and thus already suggests the larger perspective on Achilles' life and identity that the *Achilleid* will present.⁸ And Achilles will be a hero of an almost divine stature: he is identified not through his mortal father Peleus (as in *Il.* 1.1: *Peleiadeo*) but through his demi-god grandfather Aeacus (son of Zeus), and is feared by the Thunderer himself.⁹ This last detail refers obliquely to the prophecy that if Thetis were to have a son by Jupiter, that son would overthrow him; consequently Thetis was given in marriage to Peleus.¹⁰ These details are included to convey Achilles' near god-like heroism. Finally, the *Achilleid*'s contrast with the *Iliad* is also suggested by what may be construed as the aural and rhythmic similarity between *magnanimus Aeaciden* and *menin aeide thea* (the *Iliad*'s opening),¹¹ and by the fact that the *Achilleid* starts with a four-word line, relatively rare in Latin, but a stylistic feature that the Alexandrian poets took up and expanded from Homer.¹² In fact, it is the only such line in Statius' epic, and thus already suggests its engagement with Homer and Alexandrian poetics.

In these ways, the beginning of the *Achilleid* conveys important programmatic statements about the epic's theme, poetics, and plot. It raises the issue of how a post-Homeric poet can still creatively present Achilles' life and give it fresh meaning. As we shall see, the ideas and constraints involved will be ones that Statius has his Thetis resist in the remainder of book 1, as she and various characters attempt to guide Achilles' life and nurture his identity.¹³

generally (e.g., 6.307, 649); in the *Metamorphoses* of Achilles himself (13.298). For discussion of the epithet, see Barchiesi (1996) 49–50, 59; Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) *ad Achil.* 1.1.

7 Cf. Taisne (2008) 97.

8 On Achilles' heroism, see Rosati (1992) 233–5 *et passim*.

9 See Aricò (1986) 2930; Barchiesi (1996) 48–9, 55; Feeney (2004) 92; Heslin (2005) 158–60; Parkes (2008) 382.

10 See also 1.2. This myth is not explicitly stated in the *Iliad* but is first attested in Pind. *Isthm.* 8.26–47. See Gantz (1993) 228–31 for discussion of this myth and other explanations of the marriage.

11 Barchiesi (1996) 49 suggests similarities with the openings of the *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses*.

12 Bassett (1919); Tandoi (1985) 167; Barchiesi (1996) 50–1.

13 See also the discussion of this passage by Davis, pp. 157–60 in this volume.

Thetis and Neptune

Just after the prologue, the narrative of the epic begins *in medias res* as the goddess Thetis attempts to take action to protect her son Achilles from the coming Trojan war. Thetis notices Paris returning to Troy with Helen, and seeks to shipwreck his fleet by appealing to Neptune for a storm. The sea god rejects this request and thus Thetis' first attempt to initiate the action of the epic ends in utter failure. The rapidity and finality with which Thetis is thwarted makes this a startling opening sequence, made even more so by the fact that Statius has invented this episode and has modeled it on other initiatory epic actions that were indeed successful. In particular, scholars have shown well the importance of *Iliad* 1 and *Aeneid* 1.¹⁴ In this section, however, I will examine Catullan,¹⁵ Argonautic,¹⁶ and Odyssean influences, and show how they are also involved in the opening scene of the *Achilleid* and programmatically play against Thetis' attempt to divert the epic both from its stated goals (as expressed in the prologue) and from the demands of the heroic tradition.

When Thetis emerges from the water with a band of nymphs to witness the Trojan fleet (*Achil.* 1.26–8), Statius activates her role at the opening of Catullus 64, the influential epyllion on the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, which begins with Thetis and other nymphs emerging from the water to witness the Argonautic expedition. The Argonautic context so central to the opening of Catullus' poem is suggested by other references in Statius' scene:

soluerat Oebalio classem de litore pastor
Dardanus incautas blandè populatus Amyclas
plenaque materni referens praesagia somni
culpatum relegat iter, qua condita ponto
fluctibus inuisis iam Nereis imperat Helle,
cum Thetis Idaeos—heu numquam uana parentum

-
- 14 Hinds (1998) 96, for example, has called it a "prequel" to Thetis' supplication of Zeus in *Iliad* 1, while Heslin (2005) 106–9 has demonstrated how Statius makes Thetis consistently misuse her intertextual model of Juno in *Aeneid* 1. See too Juhnke (1972) 164–5; Aricò (1986) 2933–4. This episode is also indebted to Venus' address to Neptune in *Aeneid* 5, as Heslin (2005) 107–9 notes, and Venus' encounter with Mars at *Thebaid* 3.262–91, as Parkes (2008) 385 suggests.
- 15 For Catullan elements, see Mendelsohn (1990); Lauletta (1993); and esp. Hinds (1998) 123–9. My exploration of the overall influence of Catullus 64 is particularly indebted to Hinds (1998).
- 16 My Argonautic interests pertain primarily to their association with Catullus 64. For the potential influence of Valerius Flaccus, see Parkes (2009b), who argues that "the *Achilleid* figures the Valerian *Argonautica* as a prequel" (108).

auguria!—expauit uitreo sub gurgite remos.
 nec mora et undosis turba comitante sororum
 prosiluit thalamis: feruent coeuntia Phrxi
 litora et angustum dominas non explicat aequor.

ACHIL. 1.20–9

The Dardanian shepherd, having charmingly plundered unwary Sparta, fulfilling the forebodings of his mother's dream, had launched his fleet from the Oebalian shore, and was retracing his guilty journey, where Helle, now a Nereid, buried in the sea, commands the hated waves, when Thetis under the clear surge—alas the presentiments of parents are never vain—grew frightened at the oars. Nor was there delay, and she leapt forth from her billowy chambers with a crowd of her sisters accompanying: the converging shores of Phrixus seethe and the narrow sea does not have room for the goddesses.

While the phrase *culpatum relegat iter* (1.23) on the surface simply portrays Paris retracing his adulterous path back to Troy from Sparta, it also suggests that he is in some sense repeating the trip of the Argonauts, who, by sailing the world's first ship (the Argo), committed crimes against the sea, a claim Thetis will explicitly make to Neptune at 1.63–5 (see below). The sea, through which Paris is observed sailing, is described with an Argonautic reference to Helle (*qua condita ponto / fluctibus inuisis iam Nereis imperat Helle*, 1.23–4), an allusion to her fall from the golden ram (whose fleece will be sought by the Argonauts) into the water that thenceforth bore her name (i.e., the Hellespont). And Statius positions Thetis and the other Nereids by *coeuntia Phrxi / litora* (28–9), which contains an Argonautic reference to Helle's brother Phrixus, who successfully reached Colchis on the golden ram from which Helle had fallen. Thus, even though the Argonautic tradition was absent from the prologue, in this passage it becomes important to our understanding of Thetis. Statius has set her actions against the backdrop of the Argonautic expedition—and particularly Catullus 64 with its treatment of her marriage to the Argonaut Peleus, the importance of which will become increasingly clear.

When Thetis speaks in outrage about Paris and the coming war, she complains about the dishonor about to be done her, since she understands that the Trojan expedition will ultimately bring about the death of her son, Achilles (*Achil.* 1.31).¹⁷ Thetis begs Neptune to destroy Paris' fleet with a storm, as she herself connects the nascent Trojan war to the Argonautic myth (61–8), as

17 Thetis does not explain how she knows this. Could it be from the prophecy at Catullus 64.323–81, with which Statius has made Neptune seem intertextually familiar (see below)?

noted above: to Thetis, the Trojan war will be another crime (*aliud furto scelus*, 66), comparable to the Argonautic expedition (63–5), and (once again) she will suffer as a result.¹⁸ Neptune's response to Thetis makes an even more important and incisive connection between the Argonauts and the Trojan war:

Pelea iam desiste queri thalamosque minores:
crederis peperisse Ioui.

ACHIL. 1.90–1

Now stop complaining about Peleus and a lesser marriage; you will be thought to have given birth to Jupiter's child.

Thetis had made no mention of her husband in her appeal, but Neptune states that Thetis is fundamentally motivated by her anger about her marriage to the mortal (and Argonaut) Peleus,¹⁹ about which her complaints are apparently well known.²⁰ Neptune's assertion brings us back to Catullus 64. At the opening of the Catullan poem, Peleus is portrayed seeing Thetis for the first time (19–21), as he sails on the Argo for Colchis. The result is love at first sight, and Catullus' Thetis seems satisfied with her marriage to a mortal (20), which Catullus will describe as one of reciprocal love and harmony at 334–6. Statius' Thetis, however, would seem to set the record straight (so to speak) by continually voicing her outrage.²¹

Neptune, however, activates Catullus 64 in another important way. When he explains that the Trojan war is inevitable, he describes Achilles' outstanding heroism:

quem tu illic natum Sigeo in puluere, quanta
aspicies uictrix Phrygiarum funera matrum,
cum tuus Aeacides tepido modo sanguine Teucros
undabit campos, modo crassa exire uetabit
flumina et Hectoreo tardabit funere currus
inpelletque manu nostros, opera inrita, muros!

ACHIL. 1.84–9

18 Parkes (2009b) 111–12 suggests V. Fl. 1.168–9, 549–51 as an intertext here.

19 See the slightly contrasting interpretation in Mendelsohn (1990) and Heslin (2005) 110–11, 160.

20 Thetis also expresses displeasure at her marriage in *Iliad* 18.429–35. See Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) *ad Achil.* 1.90.

21 See the excellent discussion of Thetis' "anxiety" about her marriage in Mendelsohn (1990).

What a son you, in victory, will see there in the Sigeon dust; how many funerals of Phrygian mothers, when your Achilles will now inundate the Teucrian fields with warm blood, now prevent crammed rivers from flowing forth and slow his chariot with Hector's corpse and attack our walls with his hand, a vain effort!

These lines seemingly allude to Catullus 64.344–51, where the Fates predict the greatness of Achilles, the future son of Thetis and Peleus, at the couple's wedding.²² But while Statius' Neptune seemingly supports and promotes the Fates' prophecy in Catullus, Statius' Thetis does not: she is more concerned with keeping Achilles alive and away from Troy (cf. 1.73–6).

Thus, Thetis' first attempt to initiate action is in some sense enclosed by references to Catullus 64. As a result, we can say that Achilles' prophesied greatness at Troy and the wedding of Peleus and Thetis—particularly as portrayed in Catullus²³—are all things to which Statius' Thetis objects. Indeed, the beginning of the story for Thetis ultimately would seem to lie in her unhappiness about her marriage to Peleus. As noted above, the marriage had been mentioned in the first two lines of the epic as a means to emphasize the near divine heroism that Achilles will achieve at Troy. By contrast, Thetis seemingly rejects this view but instead reinterprets her marriage and her son's fated heroism as causes of personal pain (as she will make clear at 1.252–3)²⁴—a perspective not intimated in the epic's prologue. Her attempts to take action thus show her at odds with the prologue:²⁵ she aims not to promote the heroic greatness of Achilles at Troy but to prevent it from being realized.

Yet, even though Thetis' first attempt at protecting Achilles (and thus beginning the epic) fails, it nonetheless turns out to be consequential. Neptune ends his speech to the goddess with some encouragement, a promise of revenge after the Trojan war:

nec inulta dolebis
cognatisque utere fretis: dabo tollere fluctus,

22 See, e.g., Dilke (1954); Lauletta (1993); Hinds (1998) 125; Heslin (2005) 113. In this passage, Fantham (1979) 458–9, however, discerns Catullus 64 as a “direct model” only for 1.86–7, while the rest of 1.87–9 is indebted to Seneca's *Troades*. Parkes (2009b) 110 argues for the influence of Hor. *Carm.* 1.15.9–11 and especially of V. Fl. 1.549–54.

23 It should be noted, however, that the interpretation and potential irony of Catullus 64 is debated. See especially O'Hara (2007) 33–54.

24 For Thetis' concern about Achilles' mortality, see the excellent discussion in Burgess (2009) 8–19.

25 Cf. Tillard (2008) 84–5.

cum reduces Danai, nocturnaue signa Caphereus
exseret et dirum pariter quaeremus Ulixem.

ACHIL. 1.91–4

Nor will you suffer unavenged, and you will use your kindred waves: I will allow you to raise the surge when the Danaans return, and Caphereus will put out nocturnal signals, and we will seek wretched Ulysses together.

Thetis takes no comfort from this response but sees it as a stern rebuff (*grauī . . . repulsa*, 1.95). Yet it is a striking prophecy, not just because Thetis plays no such role elsewhere. Statius has Neptune create a special position for the *Achilleid* in the literary history of the Trojan war myth. He playfully offers the *Achilleid* as a precursor to both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: not only does Neptune's speech anticipate Achilles' greatness in the *Iliad* but it also joins Thetis and Neptune together in the tormenting of Odysseus after the war—that is, in the *Odyssey*.²⁶ Consequently, even though Thetis fails to model her actions successfully on Vergil's Juno, as many have seen,²⁷ she in some sense helps motivate the *Odyssey* and in particular *Odyssey* 5 where Poseidon sends a devastating storm against Odysseus—the very episode that will be Juno's own model in *Aeneid* 1 when she shipwrecks the Trojans. Statius thus makes his *Achilleid* a kind of precursor or prequel to both the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*. And just as strikingly, Statius gives Thetis no appreciation of the boon Neptune has granted, even though the metaliterary ramifications are clear to the reader. Once again, the poet puts the goddess' intertextual ineptitude on display.²⁸

Finally, by trying to shipwreck Paris before he returns to Troy, Thetis is also acting against the parameters seemingly set by Statius: she attempts an act that precedes the Scyrian episode (which the prologue at *Achil.* 1.5–6 had suggested as the beginning) and would try to stop the epic even before it gets started. Her stunning failure results not only from the necessities of tradition (i.e., of course she cannot destroy Paris and prevent the war), but also because her success would prevent Achilles from becoming the *magnanimum Aeaciden* heralded at the epic's opening. Indeed, since Thetis' attempt is so quickly and resoundingly a failure, we might even ask why it was included. However, as we have

26 Statius makes no mention of Odysseus' blinding of Poseidon's son Polyphemus as a motivation. Rosati (1992) 264 discusses the potential model of *Odyssey* 1.

27 See especially the insightful discussion in Heslin (2005) 105–14.

28 Of Thetis' failed use of the *Aeneid*, Heslin (2005) 106–7 writes: "Statius is manipulating the contrast between his poem and Vergil's rather from a position of strength. It is only the character Thetis who gets her literary models wrong, not her creator."

seen, the episode is about more than the simple fact of Thetis' failure: it virtually announces that more traditional models of starting an epic (i.e., Homer and Vergil) will not hold sway over Statius' (Ovidian) *Achilleid*. This false beginning thus cleverly reveals fundamental elements of Thetis' characterization as well as Statius' masterful, programmatic manipulation of the epic tradition.

A New Beginning

If Thetis cannot stop the Trojan war, she will at least try to prevent Achilles from fighting in it. She therefore makes a second attempt to get the epic started: she will retrieve Achilles from the centaur Chiron (his foster father) on Pelion, bring the youth to the island of Scyros where he, disguised as a maiden, will live among the daughters of Lycomedes and thus avoid the war. While Thetis' first attempt never even got off the ground, this one does, but it will be doomed to failure. In this section, I will focus on how Statius, in this second narrative "beginning," has repositioned Thetis with respect to the epic tradition. The poet has Thetis, still resisting the Catullan representation of Achilles' greatness and of her marriage, now try to take a page out of the *Metamorphoses* by transforming Achilles into a girl. But if Thetis' initial attempt at beginning showed her incompetence with Vergilian and Homeric intertextuality, her next one reveals her as equally inept at Ovidian poetics.

Thetis departs after Neptune's rebuff, already formulating her next plan (*Achil.* 1.96–7). Her first had revealed her long-standing resentment about her marriage; her second brings her sadly (*tristis*, 98) back to the origins of her trouble, to Pelion where she married Peleus and where Achilles is being raised by Chiron. She is immediately reminded of her wedding (101–2). She takes no pleasure in being back (104) but tries instead to concentrate on her new plan to save Achilles (104–5). Even so her marriage is brought up again: the places the gods occupied at the wedding are permanently visible in the landscape (109–10). Thetis' attempt to save her son is once more written against the backdrop of her marriage to Peleus and thus we think of Catullus 64.

To initiate her plan, she must first persuade the centaur Chiron to return Achilles to her. She succeeds, but Chiron represents an important foil to the goddess, for he functions as more than a foster father. Since one of his two main life pursuits is to teach heroic poetry to Achilles (*monstrare lyra ueteres heroas alumno*, 1.118), Chiron serves as a representative of the heroic tradition in tension with Thetis' attempt to hide Achilles from the Trojan war.

Indeed Chiron's verbal skill and his connection to the heroic past are on full display as he replies to Thetis' request for Achilles. Thetis had uttered a

fifteen-line speech (*Achil.* 1.127–41) that was clumsy and blustering, building up to an aposiopesis as she explained her sudden decision to retrieve her son. Chiron seemingly takes Thetis' speech as a rhetorical model but counters with grace, uttering a fifteen-line response that also ends with an aposiopesis, while he is in the midst of comparing Achilles to heroes of the Argonautic expedition (156–7): he mentions Hercules and Theseus but then falls silent, before he has a chance to mention other Argonauts, presumably including Peleus.²⁹ Yet, even though Peleus is not explicitly mentioned, he is in a sense represented or supplanted by his son,³⁰ because at this very moment Achilles arrives. It is unclear whether Chiron had intentionally timed his aposiopesis to coincide with the youth's arrival,³¹ but in any case for the reader the result is the same: Chiron's rhetorical skill is rendered even more effective both because of Achilles' sudden appearance and because Thetis' aposiopesis, which was followed by a demand for Achilles (*trade magis*, 141), is answered by Chiron's aposiopesis, which culminates in the appearance of the youth himself! In the process, Chiron has potently introduced Achilles as the instantiation of the very type of (Argonautic) heroism that Thetis would silence in her son. Thetis' attempt to shield Achilles from his prophesied *uirtus* and glory is thus undermined by the youth's incipient heroic nature³² and by his alignment with great figures from the heroic past.

In addition to being a proto-hero, Achilles almost immediately shows himself to be an effective singer of epic (as in *Iliad* 9), just as Chiron has taught him to be (*Achil.* 1.189–93). After Chiron performs (185–7), Achilles produces a song for his mother, in which he too mentions Hercules and Theseus, while also adding Pollux (189–92). These three heroes, as Heslin has noted, are linked by their participation in the Argonautic expedition.³³ And while Chiron's speech climaxed in the description of the Argonautic heroes with Peleus somehow implied (as I have argued), Achilles ends by bringing up Peleus more directly: Achilles sings of his parents' marriage (*maternos in fine toros superisque grauatum / Pelion*, "at the end his mother's marriage couches and Pelion weighed

29 Cf. Parkes (2008) 383. Moreover, the description of the Argo as *pinus Thessala* might itself suggest Peleus, since he (like Jason) was from Thessaly, while the two heroes explicitly mentioned (i.e., Hercules and Theseus) were not. Indeed, in Catullus 64.27 he is addressed as *Thessaliae columen Peleu*.

30 For the association of father and son, see Mendelsohn (1990) 299.

31 See, e.g., Fantham (1999a) 62 and Heslin (2005) 182 with n. 65.

32 Something she had already anticipated at 1.38, where Thetis suspects that he already wants to fight at Troy.

33 Heslin (2005) 92.

down by the gods," 193–4).³⁴ Once again Catullus is activated. Indeed Barchiesi and Hinds have argued that the reference to *toros* is an especially strong evocation of Catullus 64,³⁵ and that the reference to Theseus in the preceding line (*ruperit Aegides Minoa bracchia tauri*, "Aegeus' son broke the Minoan limbs of the bull," 192) makes us think of that poem's famous *ekphrasis* of the coverlet depicting Theseus' abandonment of Ariadne.³⁶ Moreover, Achilles' phrase *superisque grauatum / Pelion* (193–4) reemphasizes the permanent effect of the gods' attendance at the wedding on the landscape that Thetis witnessed at 106–10. Once again, the heroic tradition is evoked in a way that suggestively counters on the intertextual level Thetis' attempts to prevent Achilles from participating in the Trojan war (and thus the heroic tradition) at least in part because of her anger about her marriage.

Thetis ultimately takes Achilles and brings him to Scyros, where her new plan can be played out. While her first attempt showed her (vainly) coopting the forces of especially Homeric and Vergilian epic, her second attempt is decidedly Ovidian in character,³⁷ for she now tries metamorphosis. She "transforms" her son into a girl (*Achil.* 1.325–31)³⁸ in a scene that puts us especially in mind of the artist Pygmalion, who sculpts an ivory statue that comes to life (*Ov. Met.* 10.243–97).³⁹ Such a connection is metapoetically evocative: by trying to transform Achilles, Thetis attempts to change the course and meaning of Achilles' life and thus also of the epic tradition. Not surprisingly, Achilles is resistant to his mother's scheme, which goes against everything that Chiron has taught him and that his father represents (*Achil.* 1.275–7). Yet, he eventually does accede to his mother's wishes, but only because he falls in love with and marries Deidamia, in a way that will be consistent with the heroic past.

By "transforming" Achilles, Thetis threatens to take away his status as *uir*, and thus his potential to be a representative of *uirtus*. By hiding him on Scyros, she removes him from the world of war, where he can exhibit *uirtus*, be spoken about, and thus achieve his Trojan war *fama*. Thetis' second "beginning" for the poem thus represents an assault both on his gender and on the heroic

34 Hinds (1998) 127.

35 Hinds (1998) 127.

36 Hardie as cited in Hinds (1998) 127 n. 2.

37 See, e.g., Rosati (1994b) 26–33.

38 On the language here, see Barchiesi (2005) 57.

39 Hinds (1998) 138–9 and Feeney (2004) 92; Heslin (2005) 129, following Dilke (1954) *ad Achil.* 1.332–3, however, suggests that the scene resonates with "the wax *imagines* of the ancestors that adorned the houses of aristocratic Romans."

tradition. She would essentially rewrite Achilles' identity and meaning for (the) epic.⁴⁰

Ulysses and Thetis' Second Failure

At *Achilleid* 1.379–96, Thetis departs Scyros—and the poem—leaving Achilles' fate up to forces out of her control. This is perhaps surprising since she had earlier been so intensely concerned about her son's well-being.⁴¹ But now the focus shifts from Thetis to the Greeks, as they prepare for war, and the epic gets another kind of "beginning," the one we might have originally expected with Agamemnon marshaling the armies of Greece at Aulis. There Ulysses (with Diomedes) volunteers to find Achilles to bring to the war. Ulysses' interventions will make clear the failure of Thetis' "attempts" at Ovidian poetics to prevent her son's participation in the war. At the same time, we see that Statius contrives a different and more successful blending of tradition and Ovidian heroism in the figure of Ulysses, as he sets the epic in a new direction by ultimately finding Achilles and bringing him to Troy.

Up until this point, heroic greatness had been represented through word of mouth—particularly through Neptune's prophecies concerning Achilles at Troy, Chiron's poetic teachings, and Achilles' own poetry. Indeed the hero Peleus, though central to Achilles' life and identity, has not appeared in person but is known only through memory and poetry.⁴² As soon as Thetis departs, we are thrown into the world of heroes, of *uirtus*, as the Trojan expedition gets underway. Statius' transition to this other world is playfully ironic, as it comes right after Thetis' prayer that Achilles not be a *uir* but a *uirgo*: *sit uirgo pii Lycomedis Achilles* ("may Achilles be a maiden of virtuous Lycomedes," *Achil.* 1.396).

Indeed, Thetis' attempt to use an Ovidian mode to hide Achilles runs up against another narrative movement with well-known martial, epic predecessors: Ulysses will join Diomedes in a quest to find Achilles, one modeled on their night sortie in *Iliad* 10 as well as on the episode's descendants in *Aeneid* 9 and *Thebaid* 10 (the latter ironically involves the corpse of Tydeus, Diomedes'

40 For the overall tension between *arma* and *amor*, see Hinds (2000) and Delarue (2008).

41 At 1.684–8, we learn that Thetis would like to shipwreck Ulysses and Diomedes as they sail to Scyros, but that Jupiter prevents her.

42 Earlier treatments, e.g., the *Cypria*, had Peleus bring Achilles to Chiron. In Statius, Peleus does not play any such role. See Fantham (1999a) 59 and Heslin (2005) 171–2.

father!).⁴³ Seeing that the Greek expedition needs to find Achilles before sailing to Troy, the two volunteer to go on a mission to Scyros, where Calchas has prophesied the youth to be hidden in disguise. Their expedition is swift and effective. Arriving in Scyros and watching the girls carefully, they quickly concentrate their suspicions on the one they believe to be Achilles. Ulysses, displaying the guile or *dolus* that defines his character, lays out beautiful gifts meant to be desirable to girls, but alongside them he also places implements of war.⁴⁴ Achilles is drawn by his very nature to the latter and thus is tricked into revealing his identity. It is a wonderfully clever ploy on the part of Ulysses, one that seems to catch even Diomedes by surprise (see 1.712–25).

Thetis' plan to disguise her son has thus failed on a number of levels. Her "attempt" at Ovidian poetics was insufficient. Unlike in the *Metamorphoses*, where transformations go much deeper and with greater permanence, Achilles' transformation was artificial—he was never more than Achilles in drag. In addition, Thetis' *femineis* . . . *dolis* ("feminine wiles," *Achil.* 1.527) are no match for Ulysses,⁴⁵ the greatest practitioner of *dolus* in the epic tradition. He is a far more Ovidian figure, a close relative to the crafty Ulysses in *Metamorphoses* 13. There he defeats Ajax in the competitive debate for Achilles' armor in part by relying on his discovery of Achilles on Scyros (*Met.* 13.162–9), an episode that Ovid's Ulysses only summarizes but that Statius' enacts.⁴⁶

Moreover, Thetis' attempt to "resist" Catullus 64 comes to naught. Achilles' disguise is of course uncovered, and, perhaps more interestingly, the representations of Thetis' marriage, the heroic world, and Achilles' fate in Catullus 64 not only remain intact but are amplified by Achilles. His cross-dressing ends in his marriage to Deidamia, whom he takes by force (as was the case in some versions of how Peleus "won over" Thetis).⁴⁷ Moreover, Achilles abandons Deidamia, as Theseus had Ariadne in the famous *ekphrasis* in Catullus 64. Indeed, the closing line of book 1, as many have noted, is a direct allusion to Ariadne's complaint in Catullus about Theseus' faithlessness:⁴⁸ *inrita uentosaerapiebant uerba procellae* ("gusty winds blew his empty words away,"

43 Cf. Ganiban (2007) 131–6.

44 For the cultural resonances particularly of the shield and trumpet here, see the excellent discussion in Barchiesi (2005) 63–7.

45 On the pejorative nuance of *femineis* here, see Tillard (2008) 86.

46 For the traditions that Ovid makes use of, see Heslin (2005) 205 n. 46.

47 For the relationship between Achilles' rape of Deidamia in Statius and Ov. *Met.* 11.229–65, 13.162–9, *Ars Am.* 1.681–74, and other Ovidian passages, see Aricò (1986) 2945; Mendelsohn (1990) 304–5; Heslin (2005) 262–7; Davis (2006); Micozzi (2007a); Sanna (2007).

48 On this parallel, see Dilke (1954) *ad Achil.* 1.960; Lauletta (1993) 88; Hinds (1998) 126; Heslin (2005) 143–4.

Achil. 1.960); *inrita uentosae linquens promissa procellae* (“leaving his empty promises to the gusty wind,” Catull. 64.59). Finally, when Achilles announces his and Deidamia’s “marriage” to Lycomedes (his new father-in-law), he says:

Peleus te nato socerum et Thetis hospita iungunt
adlegantque suos utroque a sanguine diuos.

ACHIL. 1.898–9

Peleus and your guest-friend Thetis unite with you as a father-in-law to their son and they adduce in support their own divine relatives from both bloodlines.

For the first time Peleus and Thetis are mentioned together as unified husband and wife, at the very moment that Achilles’ “marriage” to Deidamia is made public.⁴⁹ And inasmuch as Thetis regretted her marriage to Peleus because it resulted in a mortal child, the goddess now has a doubly mortal grandson. Book 1 thus ends with Thetis’ thorough failure to take control of the epic and of Achilles’ identity. She is stopped by Ulysses, another character who in a sense sets the epic in motion—but on the path toward the Trojan war and the realization of Achilles as *magnanimus Aeaciden*.

The Beginning of Book 2 and the End of the *Achilleid*

In many ways the 167 lines we have of book 2 constitute yet another beginning. Achilles appears as if the whole Scyros episode—i.e., the whole of book 1—had not happened (2.9–11).⁵⁰ He himself undergoes a transformation, but this time to warrior, a change that was all but inevitable, as Ulysses himself notes (41–2). Achilles is on course to fulfill his fated glory at Troy. As Hinds has insightfully put it: “the beginning of the *Achilleid*’s second book actually dramatizes or ‘stages’ a metapoetic meditation on the (in)appropriateness of the whole Scyrian episode to the epic narrative that it has inaugurated.”⁵¹

With Achilles finally on his way to Troy with Ulysses, book 2 offers us the (proto-)warrior Achilles, the one that we may have always been expecting from the prologue. Yet even so, Statius throws in a few more tricks. Diomedes

49 However, see Mendelsohn (1990), who remarks on the differences between the two marriages.

50 See esp. Hinds (2000) 241–4.

51 Hinds (2000) 241.

asks Achilles about his early life (2.87–91), and Achilles obliges with a “song” accentuating his physical training and exploits during his time with Chiron.⁵² With this ending to the *Achilleid*, we have a new beginning to the tale: Achilles relates a time of his life that precedes the Scyrian episode that the prologue suggested as the epic’s beginning point (1.5). Moreover, at the very moment we think we have “found” Achilles, we discover him more like Ulysses, delivering an inset narrative of self-presentation à la *Odyssey* 9–12 (and *Aeneid* 2–3).⁵³ Indeed, the opening line of the epic, by focusing on one man, *magnanimum Aeaciden*, actually has more of the *Odyssey*’s *andra* than the *Iliad*’s *menin*. And to make things even more complicated, Achilles ends his inset narrative with an aposiopesis and sudden reference to his mother Thetis: *scit cetera mater* (“my mother knows the rest,” 2.167).⁵⁴ Thus with the final lines of the epic, when we think the male, heroic world has in some sense been reasserted, Achilles defers to his mother, and we are returned to the beginning of the epic with Thetis’ maternal authority and desire to protect and define Achilles. To the very end, Statius’ intertextual experimentation with beginnings continues to have important and playful ramifications for Achilles’ epic identity.

52 See Fantham (1999a) 63–6 and Barchiesi (2005) 55–7.

53 Indeed Achilles’ inability to achieve heroic glory while hidden on Scyros is somewhat like Odysseus’ languishing on the island of Calypso in *Odyssey* 5.

54 See Hinds (2000) 244. Cf. above for the use of aposiopesis by Thetis and Chiron.

PART 3

Social and Cultural Matters



Creating the Distinguished Addressee: Literary Patronage in the Works of Statius

Meike Rühl

Nowadays, few other ancient poems convey a more vivid impression of realism than Statius' *Silvae* and Martial's *Epigrams*. However, this has sometimes turned out to be detrimental because these texts have often been used primarily as sources of information about daily life in the Roman imperial era.¹ Over the last two decades, this notion has undergone fundamental changes.

Most scholars dealing with Statius' *Silvae* have started recently to concentrate on the social aspects of his poetry. For instance, they prioritize the function of the poems, the circle of addressees, and the relationship between poet and addressee.² A second major field of study is concerned with the material world within the *Silvae* and its poetic transformation.³ Meanwhile, all books of the *Silvae* have been furnished with commentaries and a large number of essays deal with single poems, motifs, or groups of themes.

This chapter aims to address the social and cultural importance of these poems by providing an overview and then an evaluation of the current state of research. First it will provide an outline of the context of the *Silvae*, then a brief summary of methodological and theoretical approaches to the poems; lastly it will examine how far the *Silvae*, as well as Martial's *Epigrams*, establish literature as a prestige object for their addressees, and how far such literary exclusiveness figures into the portrayal of the addressee. Two series of poems, written by Martial and Statius respectively, will be dealt with.

Cultural and Social Conditions of Personal Poetry, Literary Patronage, and Professional Poetship

The Cultural and Social Conditions of Personal Poetry

At the end of the first century CE, a structural change which had become apparent in the era of the late Roman republic, but which had already begun

¹ Such as Friedländer's *Sittengeschichte* (1862–1871).

² A. Hardie (1983); Nauta (2002); Rühl (2006).

³ Newlands (2002); Zeiner (2005).

with Rome's expansion across the Mediterranean in the second century BCE, had taken place in Roman society: whereas the (urban) Roman nobility once had focused primarily on the *cursus honorum* and the continued adherence to the *mores maiorum* as means of both conforming and distinguishing themselves, these opportunities were increasingly being supplanted by material and cultural ways of acquiring prestige. On top of that, the Roman elite had become permeable as a group, as both local elites outside of Rome and freedmen experienced a gain in power and status owing to social contacts and material prosperity. This was further accompanied by the development of *otium* into an avenue for public self-fashioning. The most frequent and most significant change certainly was the new way of self-display, based on material prosperity.⁴

With regard to the elite (old and new), however, a growing “intellectualization”⁵ is also noticeable. This not only manifested itself materially, for instance, in the stylization of suburban villas as educational landscapes, but also in terms of private literary activities, serving as a means to communicate *otium* and personal prestige apart from the traditional senatorial devotion to historiographical works. These strategies became most evident first with Cicero, who nearly covered the complete literary gamut in presenting his positions and merits, and subsequently with the younger Pliny, who discovered in particular the letter as a medium to present and to reflect on *otium* and *negotium*.

These literary strategies were especially effective as good publicity if there was an audience acknowledging them. In most cases the audience consisted of the same or directly adjacent social groups, thus providing common ground for successful communication. This explains why social media aimed at creating group cohesion was particularly in demand. For types and collections of texts such as Pliny's epistolary corpus were perfectly suited to establish and show both intellectual inclusiveness and exclusiveness due to their explicit duality of addresser and addressee. Thereby, it did not matter whether the reception of these texts remained restricted to a certain circle within a group, because the interconnectedness of addressees and named persons alike—based on the collected edition of texts—already provided adequate “public relations.”

Furthermore, such a collection of texts not only took into account the general proclivity of Roman society towards horizontal and vertical social interconnections, but was also able to address them in individual texts and thus emphasize the positioning of the individual within a coordinated network. Pliny's attitude towards his named and addressed contemporaries can

4 Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 450. As to *otium* see also Stein-Hölkeskamp (2003).

5 The term used by Scholz (2011) 363 to avoid the lopsided view of a “Hellenization” of Rome.

be deduced from the so-called “portrait letters,” that is, letters for the actual addressee describing a third party’s merits, qualities, and traits (political, biographical, or cultural) and evaluating or recommending him to the addressee. It is obvious that forming a judgment on contemporaries required not only expertise, but also a social position that was at least equal if not superior on the part of the addresser and the addressee.⁶

However, Pliny’s way of self-promotion was not for everyone. Alternatively, one could draw on a professional writer. With Statius’ *Silvae* and Martial’s *Epigrams* we are able to pin down this segment of professional writing. These poems acted as “public relations” for the addressee, therefore creating an image of the addressee for a certain public, that is, within a certain social group, such that he appeared to be part of this group, while simultaneously making him stand out from it.

Literary Patronage and the Professional Poet

The term professional writer embraces the notion that poetry is written either on explicit or implicit (i.e., not directly expressed but expected) commission.⁷ If, however, one side requests this service, the other side has to offer a corresponding equivalent, especially in the case of a society based on reciprocity like the Roman one. Within this system, the poet’s output is literally more calculable, since the poet always produces a text. As to the recompense offered by the commissioner, the situation is slightly different. Since the “payment” of the poet is usually not mentioned—unless it can be classified as extraordinary and thus re-used to characterize the commissioner, such as the supply of tiles for Martial’s leaking roof (Mart. 7.36) or the water supply leading to Statius’ Alban estate (*Silv.* 3.1.62), diverted by Domitian himself—we depend on a few named cases or an abstract expression. One of the few examples discussing material rewards is Pliny’s obituary letter for Martial (*Ep.* 3.21), in which he states that he gave him a *uiaticum* (i.e., a kind of travel allowance for his journey to Spain), without, however, providing more information on its amount.

Reciprocal relationships in Roman society were usually not symmetrical, but rather connections between individuals or institutions in different social positions.⁸ These mutual social connections were covered by the Latin term *amicitia*. From this it appears that the relationship between poet and addressee also was quite asymmetrical and thus a type of literary patronage. Still, the social

6 As to the portrait letters, see Ludolph (1997) and Pausch (2004) 51–146.

7 For professional poetry and poets in ancient Greece, see A. Hardie (1983) 15–36; for the relationship between occasional literature and literary patronage, see Rühl (2006) 91–113.

8 Fundamentally Nauta (2002) 58–73. For a synopsis of *amicitia* now see Verboven (2011).

superior does not necessarily have to be the commissioner. The poet can also be proactive and produce an unsolicited poem, thus persuading the addressee to start a relationship based on *amicitia*.⁹

The following section is intended to give a brief summary of how the respective effort on the parts of the commissioner and the poet can be conceived and evaluated. After that I will examine whether other models exist that enable us to elucidate the process of depicting and construing reality in the text.

Methodological and Theoretical Approaches

Cultural Sociology

Sociocultural models and theories offer an explanation of the mechanisms that allow poetry referring to social events and interpersonal relationships to be integrated into a specific social context. For Statius and Martial, approaches prioritizing the relationship between social structure and social action have proved viable.¹⁰

For example, the terms *habitus* and “capital,” coined by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, serve to elucidate social structures and practices: *habitus* describes the incorporation of social practices and relations into a social group;¹¹ the complementary term “capital” describes the resources of various provenance that are at the disposal of members of a society and allows them to claim a certain position within it.

On the one hand, these concepts serve as tools to describe how material culture can be transformed into poetry while retaining and enhancing its “value.” On the other hand, they help disclose the efforts underlying the exchange between poet and patron, with both parties ultimately profiting from it. The poet uses his cultural capital—his poetic prowess, his acquired cultural and above all literary knowledge—to put a positive, refined complexion on the addressee. The addressee, in turn, uses his economic capital to pay the poet, his social capital to introduce him to other potential addressees, or his symbolic capital to disseminate favorable judgment by virtue of his social authority; as a renowned person and addressee, he already is *per se* a valuable and lucrative addition to the poetry (this is especially true if the emperor is among the circle of addressees and the poet thus can claim his status as a “court poet”). While both sides contribute the type of capital they have acquired due to their social

9 An example of such an unsolicited poem is the *Laus Pisonis*; see Rühl (2006) 24–8.

10 In general Nauta (2002) 1–34. Zeiner (2005) and Rühl (2006) use Bourdieu's terms.

11 Bourdieu (1998) 1–18.

position, the addressee thus has more opportunities to fulfill his part of the gift exchange. On the other side, however, there is always a literary text.

Bourdieu's concepts are most apt in describing which forces act in a certain social field and which factors induce the members of a society to adopt certain practices. These factors are primarily synchronic, permitting the description of a sector at a certain point in time. However, outlining a diachronic development is problematic.

Hence, consideration should be given to the existence of other theoretical models which can help to explain why it is these cultural and "intellectual" factors, apart from the material ones, that become prestigious in the Flavian period.

Cultural Semiotics

For this purpose, the models of cultural semiotics, especially those of the literary scholar and cultural historian Jurij Lotman, provide a helpful approach. These models interpret culture as a hierarchy of semiotic systems creating certain artifacts, namely, material products, in the broadest sense of the term—including literary works. Certain members of a society access certain material products via certain codes.¹² The more central and significant an artifact is for the identity of a society (or part of a society), the more it circulates and the more frequently it is used, the more prestigious it is.

How does a code or an artifact become central for a certain society? Texts and codes are hierarchically organized; Lotman chooses the term "semiosphere," which needs to be pictured as being concentrically arranged.¹³ This explains why codes from other cultures that are at first perceived as external are gradually adapted and ultimately internalized. The dynamics arising from the inclusion and semiotization of external codes explain changes in cultural phenomena.

If we apply this model to Roman culture at the end of the first century CE, it becomes understandable how artifacts first viewed as Greek (luxury goods as well as literary works) were absorbed into Roman culture, but at the same time could be classified as being inappropriate by an elite Roman, until, during the course of the late republic and the early principate, they penetrated the center of Roman culture. However, not only did the roles of objects and texts undergo a change, the group of people using signs changed too: it grew. The group of *nobiles* was expanded by the number of prosperous Romans. Codes such as *luxuria* and *otium* became more frequent and more prestigious.

12 I.e., attributions of signifier and signified. Cf. Posner (2003) 53 and (2004) 15–16.

13 Lotman (2005) and Posner (2004) 21–8.

When a certain code has been centralized, it is used by an enlarged segment of society for whom it has also become prestigious and attractive.¹⁴ The more frequently this code is used, the more exemplary it becomes and the more it is imitated. Thus, a formerly marginal sign turns into a “mainstream” phenomenon. A social group relying on a distinguished identity is therefore more likely to adapt and elaborate (at that point) peripheral texts.

This is exactly the type of development visible in connection with our authors and poems in Roman society. At the end of the first century CE, it was no longer sufficient to possess and display luxury goods in order to stand out from a crowd that was also able to afford expensive tableware, mural paintings, or exquisite food. That is why in transforming the code of the cultural elite the reflection and sublimation of these artifacts and the phenomena of *luxuria* and *otium* join in, mediated by literature. A distinguished Roman such as Pliny deals with this process himself—or he delegates it to a professional writer.

Within the social group using this intellectual code, the only way for an individual to stand out and claim exclusiveness is to maintain and expand the code in a specific direction. Hence, the aim of the following two sections will be to examine how the occasional poems of Statius’ *Silvae* and Martial’s *Epigrams* create exclusiveness. In the end we will see that the choice between Martial’s poems and Statius’ poems possibly suggests a preference for a specific model.

In order to compare the cultural codes, I have chosen a sequence of poems addressed to persons of a presumably similar social background. None of them seems to have held a political or administrative office; instead, they seem to have acquired their social position solely from the style of their *otium*, so that they can be seen as typical representatives of the new cultural elite.

Martial’s Epigrams for Flaccus

In order to consider the question of exclusiveness and its feasibility within the substantial number of epigrams and the people named therein, I have chosen those epigrams that are either addressed to a certain Flaccus or mention him. The selection is based on the proposition that multiple references to a person indicate a closer patronal relationship. According to our previous observations, a patronal/*amicitia*-relationship can be defined as a series of mutual favors. Hence, recurring references to a person in these epigrams can be seen as indicative of a flourishing exchange of gifts.

14 Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 356–440 clearly shows this, using the example of lamps, vessels, pottery, couches.

Outside of Martial's epigrams, Flaccus cannot be traced prosopographically. This suggests that we encounter a Roman who has become widely known—at least in the case of the recipient—only via this medium.¹⁵ Since the biographical details that can be deduced from the texts are comparatively scarce,¹⁶ we may conclude that he did not aim at or assume political offices, as Martial would have mentioned these at least selectively.¹⁷ Thus, we are able to track down a representative of the previously mentioned social group, who does not gain prestige through the traditional Roman authorities, but profits from the cultural changes and the revaluation of *otium* and *luxuria* and takes advantage of these to position himself in Roman society.

First of all, the references to Flaccus in Martial's books of epigrams are salient because the epigrams concerning Flaccus run like a central thread through nearly all of the books.¹⁸ This creates the impression of a both constant and reliable *amicitia*-relationship. What do we learn about Flaccus from this epigrammatic biography? Interestingly, precious little. The following details can be gleaned from the poems: Flaccus wrote poetry himself (1.61), he was propertied (1.76), had a *puer delicatus* called Amazonicus (4.42) and a *lagalopex* (7.87),¹⁹ seems to have stayed at Baiae many a time (1.59, 11.80) and for a longer period in Cyprus (8.45, 9.90), and was Martial's patron, of course (8.55).

I will refer to some epigrams in order to illustrate these results. To facilitate comparison, I will cite poems that are thematically linked with the poems addressed to Atedius Melior.

Martial 4.42 raises the question of the ideal *puer delicatus*. The question is put to Martial and answered by him; in doing so, he imagines conversing with Flaccus: *Si quis forte mihi possit praestare roganti, / audi, quem puerum, Flacce, rogare uelim* ("if someone happened to fulfill my wish, listen, Flaccus, what kind of boy I would ask for," 1–2). Martial's ideal *puer* turns out to be exquisite: he should come from the Nile, but lack the typical dark complexion;

15 It remains undecided whether this also applied to a Roman contemporary. But since Martial expected a wider circulation of his works, it is possible that the reader encountered persons unknown to him/her in a no longer existing face-to-face-society, but managed to integrate them into a cultural scheme. For the circulation of epigrams and the society of the book, see Fitzgerald (2007) 139–66.

16 For biography, e.g., Nauta (2002) 59–61; Moreno Soldevila (2006) 310; Vallat (2008) 51–3.

17 Cf., e.g., with regard to Arruntius Stella's career, Nauta (2002) 156.

18 First mentioned in 1.57, finally in 12.74. I share the view of most commentators that Flaccus is one and the same person (unless the reference unmistakably applies to Horace).

19 The term is a *hapax*. There are sharp divisions over the type of pet; cf. Galán Vioque (2002) *ad Mart.* 7.87; at least it seems to have long ears and to be rather cute, judging from the context.

instead, he should be fair and whiter than snow (*niue candidior*, 5); all of his other external features should be well-balanced and not seem ordinary (*pulchrior est, quanto rarior*, “the rarer, the more lovely,” 6), eyes like stars, soft hair, a chiseled nose, red lips, etc.—and exclusively available to Martial. After seven distichs this wishful thinking comes to an end, when Flaccus directly interposes: “*iam scio, nec fallis: nam me quoque iudice verum est. / talis erat*,” *dices “noster Amazonicus”* (“I know, you are not mistaken, for in my judgment it is the truth,’ you will say, ‘just like that was our Amazonicus,’” 15–16). The poem’s ultimate punch line then shows that Martial did not describe a mere illusion, but Flaccus’ existing *puer delicatus*. For Flaccus, the aim of the epigram is gradually revealed due to his ability to identify a well-known person line by line; for the reader, the ending of the poem is much more surprising.

Thus, we can glean several details from this poem. On the one hand, young *pueri delicati* obviously were a common sight in contemporary society, used as a way of passing the time, and obviously also as a prestige object. We learn this not only from the epigram, but also from surviving texts in which it is frequently mentioned.²⁰ On the other hand, Martial’s description of the *puer* is applicable to Flaccus’ Amazonicus, that is, he must have seen him. Hence, the *noster* of the closing line could be regarded as inclusive. Thus, Flaccus’ and Martial’s taste would be identical. That this *puer delicatus* is something special after all is not only emphasized by the description of an illusion, but also by the well-balance external detail. In other words, Flaccus owns something others can only dream of, and thus has a unique feature (which becomes clear only when reading the epigram).

Flaccus’ fictitious direct speech creates the impression that the epigram was part of a conversation between poet and addressee, to be continued in the other epigrams.²¹ Proportion and exquisiteness of the desired object are recurring themes: 1.57 already discusses Martial’s idea of the ideal *puella*: not too difficult, not too easy, not the sort to yearn for, but not tedious. The epigrammatic talk about this topic is continued in 11.100, considering the ideal *puella* as to the aspect of femininity.

Expert exchange on advantages of *pueri* and *puellae* within the cited poems and a whole series of other epigrams containing lewd punch lines is thus established as a joint code between patron and poet. Hence, Flaccus not only possesses sensual luxury objects, but can be regarded as an expert after the perusal of Martial’s epigrams.

20 Cf. Moreno Soldevila (2006) *ad Mart.* 4.42 and Pollini (2003), with more bibliographical references.

21 Nauta (2002) 163–4 uses the term “enhanced communication.”

Moreover, Flaccus also displays expert knowledge in the field of literature, since he writes poetry himself. Right at the beginning of the collection of epigrams, he is located on a poetic map (1.61) with every town praising its poets. Apart from Flaccus, Padua has Livy and Stella, whereas Bilbilis has Licinianus and Martial, of course. This poem is a typical group epigram used by Martial to interconnect several of his contemporaries (and himself) with each other.²² According to the person named, the profit gained from being juxtaposed with other contemporary writers must have varied; however, all of them benefit from a reference in conjunction with Vergil.

Martial 8.55 also discusses Flaccus' poetic expertise; however, not between poet and poet, but rather between poet and patron. Flaccus' initial astonishment at the apparent lack of poets like Vergil (1–4) is answered in the following way: *sint Maecenates, non deerunt, Flacce, Marones / Vergiliumque tibi uel tua rura dabunt* ("let there be Maecenases, Flaccus, then there will be no want of Maros, and your own estates will give you a Vergil," 5–6). In the ensuing lines, Vergil's great achievements are solely ascribed to Maecenas' generous financial support and the inspiration provided by Maecenas' *puer* Alexis.²³ Martial then mentions as if in passing that Maecenas sponsored not only Vergil, but also poets like Varius or Marsus. If Flaccus provided Martial with support like Maecenas, would Martial become a Vergil? No, but a Marsus (*Vergilius non ero, Marsus ero*, 24).

This comparison is indeed ambiguous. On the face of it, the epigram addressed to Flaccus seems to ask for more generous patronage: if one wants poets as before, one has to sponsor them just as before. However, financial contributions are no miracle cure; Martial would never turn into a poet like Vergil. With this turn, a second level of meaning opens up: if Martial is able to become a Marsus, an epigrammatic poet becomes an epigrammatic poet. That would not be a real change, but rather an affirmation of the present situation. Conversely, this implies that Flaccus already is as good as Maecenas. The apparent request for more generous patronage turns out to be an affirmation, after all.

22 Another example for this is the banquet invitation for six patrons in 10.48. See also Rühl (2006) 70 and Nauta (2002) 58–61.

23 "*Accipe diuitias et uatum maximus esto; / tu licet et nostrum*" dixit "*Alexin ames*" ("take the money and be the greatest poet of all," he said, 'you may even love my Alexis,'" 8.55.11–12). In the light of the previous observations, this otherwise unrecorded attribution (cf. Schöffel [2002] *ad loc.*) certainly is designed as a punch line for Flaccus.

Finally, we must consider Martial 11.80:

Litus beatae Veneris aureum Baias,
 Baias superbae blanda dona Naturae,
 ut mille laudem, Flacce, uersibus Baias,
 laudabo digne non satis tamen Baias.
 sed Martialem malo, Flacce, quam Baias.
 optare utrumque pariter, inprobi uotum est.
 quod si deorum munere hoc tibi detur,
 quid gaudiorum est Martialis et Baiae!

MART. 11.80

Golden shore of happy Venus, Baiae,
 Baiae, alluring gift of superb nature,
 even if I wanted to praise Baiae in a thousand verses, Flaccus,
 I could not praise Baiae enough.
 But more than Baiae, Flaccus, I want Martial.
 To ask for both at the same time is impudent.
 But if this gift were granted to you by the gods,
 how much delight would be Martial and Baiae!

The poem can be divided into two parts, both apostrophizing Flaccus, so that the statements can be applied to him. In the first half of the poem, the poet describes his inability to appreciate a place like Baiae with adequate artistic expression. His enthusiasm for this place thus corresponds with Flaccus' enthusiasm for Baiae. It might be a perfect idyll: how delightful would it be, if the poet were not the only one to enjoy Baiae, but also his friend Iulius Martialis.²⁴

This fairly impudent request could actually come true, if Flaccus—favored by the gods—were to invite Iulius Martialis. The metrical arrangement of the closing line, which not only (like the preceding ones) lays an ultimate emphasis on Baiae, but also the preceding *et*, virtually adds up to “Baiae plus.” However, the addressee Flaccus will only be able to enjoy this *pièce de résistance* if he follows the poet's implicit instruction. Poet and addressee are part of a spiral towards perfection. Flaccus offers Baiae to the poet as an epitome of luxury (*litus . . . aureum*, 1), whereas Martial is able to increase this luxury through the virtual invitation of a mutual acquaintance (suggested by the mention of Martialis without any further addition); Flaccus could make it come true by

24 As to Iulius Martialis, see, e.g., Moreno Soldevila (2006) 435–6.

means of an invitation. Again, it is the epigrammatic poem that renders a stay at a fashionable place such as Baiae exclusive.

Let us summarize the main results. With regard to culturally distinguishing goods, Flaccus can offer ones that many others possess as well: a *puer delicatus*, an extraordinary pet, extensive stays at the fashionable beach of Baiae, and his own literary efforts as a pastime. However, it is the transformation of these luxury goods into Martial's epigrams that distinguishes him from his like-minded contemporaries. Simultaneously, it is apparent that the goods are not central to the poem, but rather the conversation with "his" poet about them. It is ultimately Martial's epigrammatic and ironical ability to turn something ordinary into something special that distinguishes Flaccus as addressee.

Statius' Poems for Atedius Melior

For comparative purposes, I will now focus on an addressee who figures prominently in Statius' poems, Atedius Melior. This friend of Statius (as well as Martial) is the dedicatee of book 2 of the *Silvae* and addressee of poems 2.1, 2.3, and 2.4. As was the case for Flaccus, biographical information for Melior is scarce and can be gleaned only from these poems and a few of Martial's epigrams (2.69; 4.54; 6.28, 29; 8.38).²⁵ Political details are not mentioned at all; instead, Melior appears as a propertied and reclusive patron with an estate on the Caelian Hill (*Silv.* 2.3). This impression is further intensified by the fact that Melior is the dedicatee of Statius' second book, which has obviously been designed for him, according to Statius' remarks (*totus hic ad te liber meus etiam sine epistola spectet*, "even without the epistolary preface, my entire book looks to you," 2 *praef.* 4). This book contains the smallest number of political references, especially since the only poem addressed to Domitian deals with an incident at the amphitheater (2.5). The dedicatee seems rather to prioritize *otium*. Thematically, there are all in all four *epicedia* among the poems of the book, two of which are on *pueri delicati* (Melior's Glaucias [2.1] and Flavius Ursus' Philetos [2.6]), and two on animals (Melior's parrot [2.4] and Domitian's lion [2.5]); in addition, there is a description of the villa of Pollius Felix (2.2) and two birthday poems, one addressed to Melior (2.3) and one to Lucan (2.7). The composition of book 2 thus offers several ways of comparing the representation of Melior with that of another addressee within a similar type of poem. Only the poem for Pollius Felix remains without thematic equivalent.²⁶

25 For Melior's biography, see Nauta (2002) 282–3; Newlands (2011b) 20–1.

26 This certainly has to do with the prominent position of Pollius Felix in book 3.

If we juxtapose the poems in question, it is most striking that a comparison between *Silvae* 2.1 and 2.6, the two *epicedia* for *pueri delicati*, results in the impression of a much closer relationship between poet and addressee in the case of Statius and Melior than in the case of him and Flavius Ursus. This is not only suggested by the length of the *epicedia* (234 lines versus 105) and the difference in biographical and situational detail with regard to the *pueri*, but also by the poet's display of sympathy. Emphatic utterances of joint grief—such as *sed confer gemitus pariterque fleamus* (“but let us share groans and weep together,” 2.1.35)—are to be found only in the poem for Melior and contribute to the image of an intimate and familiar relationship between poet and addressee.²⁷

Furthermore, the birthday poem for Melior (2.3) also implies a close relationship.²⁸ Since a commission is not explicitly named—in contrast to Lucan's anniversary poem (2.7)—Statius can be credited with having thought of his patron and taken a poetic interest in his life. *Silvae* 2.3 is not a birthday poem in the classical sense, however, but is marked by subtle composition, for only in the closing lines is the actual function of the poem as a birthday gift addressed. However, if a birthday poem serves to celebrate its subject on this special day, 2.3 is informative both in terms of content and form with regard to several aspects.

The poem deals with an *aetion* about a tree artfully bending towards a pool on Melior's property on the Caelian Hill. The poem tells us that Pan had pursued a nymph along the hills of what would later be Rome, until she finally sought refuge in a pool on the Caelian Hill. The disappointed lover, being unable to swim and thus unable to follow her, then instructed a young tree near the pool to approach the nymph as closely as possible and to cover and protect her with its branches. With this *aetion*, Melior's estate is placed in the literary topography of Rome along with the aetiological myths of Janiculum, Aventine, and Quirinal (2.3.12–14).

In accordance with the *aetion* that places the tree in Rome's mythical-historical past, its owner has to be a man with a traditional Roman background. However, this tree is not only mythically but also literarily entrenched, since it obviously plays an intertextual game with Ovidian pre-texts²⁹ that seem to have been changed significantly: Statius' *aetion* lacks violence, the nymph's place of flight is turned into a place of refuge. This place mirrors the features of its owner, who is reliable and without guile (*sine fraude lares*, “a home

27 As to the comparison in detail, see Rühl (2006) 181–95.

28 For a comparison between Statius and Martial, based on the intertextuality of *Silv.* 2.3 and *Mart.* 9.61, see Newlands (2011a); cf. Dominik (forthcoming).

29 Cf. Hardie (2005); Newlands (2011b) 14–15 *et passim ad Silv.* 2.3.

without guile," 2.3.16), and as brilliant as the crystal surface of the pool (*perspicuas . . . aquas / nitidi Melioris*, "the pellucid pool of brilliant Melior," 1–2).

In terms of topic, this poem stands out against the others. It could well have described the exquisite decor or the location of Melior's estate. Instead, Statius chooses a tree, seemingly without any connection to Melior—apart from its position. It is then only the poem that turns the tree into something outstanding and unique; only the poem renders it a symbol of Melior. More than other poems, this particular poem foregrounds the poet's literary skills. Implicitly then, the birthday poem can only fully develop its subtle recourse to literary predecessors if it encounters a worthy recipient. This notion is intensified in the following poem.

At the center of the second book and thus in a prominent position is *Silvae* 2.4, an *epicedium* on Melior's recently deceased parrot. Extensive scholarship has shown that this poem is not merely about a dead pet, but also about the relationship between poet and addressee.³⁰ I will first summarize the main conclusions, before developing them further. The most obvious evidence for a metapoetic reading is the *epicedium* within the *epicedium* (24–37). Instead of the poet, but under his guidance, all talking birds sing a threnody on their deceased colleague. Furthermore, there are also parallels between poet and parrot. Just like the parrot, the professional poet serves as a source of eloquent entertainment not only for his owner (1), but also for the guests at the *convivium* (31); like the parrot, the poet depends on a reward (5); like the parrot, the poet is a lamenting friend (29).

However, there are also striking differences between parrot and poet. A parrot can only echo studied words (*monstrata reddere uerba*, 2.4.31), and it only talks when asked (*adfatus*, 7). Hence, the owner of a parrot always hears the same and only what he wants to hear, since he has taught the bird to do so. As a poet, Statius claims to produce not only conventional but also new content; he, the poet, is the one who teaches the birds the *epicedium* (*addiscite*, 23). As a professional poet, he not only talks when commissioned, but also of his own accord. Finally, he does not (merely) reproduce what the commissioner wants to hear, but also employs poetic license. Thus, a poet is a much more challenging surrogate for a dead parrot and the true friend of the addressee: the parrot used to be able to talk when still alive, whereas Statius' poems are eternal and talk every time they are read.

This poem uses metaliterary levels more than any other poem in the *Silvae*. As a parody of an *epicedium* it is literature in the second degree and thus presupposes the recipient's ability to reflect on the communicative situation and the type of poetry. Thus, it addresses not only the function of an *epicedium*,

30 Cf. Krasser (2002); Myers (2002); Dietrich (2002); Newlands (2005).

but also the function of the poet, specifically Statius as a professional poet of *epicedia*; ultimately too it addresses the role of the patron as a commissioner. That it is Atedius Melior who receives the parodic *epicedium* requires that both the poet and Melior as addressee are able to reflect on the function of literature on a metaliterary level. *Silvae* 2.4 thus shows us that it is not Melior's "distinction" as a patron to have owned a precious parrot that he furnished with a luxurious and expensive cage. Melior's actual luxury and his exclusiveness are to have a poet like Statius.

Creating the Distinguished Addressee

In the final decades of the first century CE, texts transforming addressee-related occasions and persons of the real world into literature flourished. By means of a semio-cultural approach, the frequent occurrence of this phenomenon can be explained with intracultural dynamics that render originally marginal practices central. On the one hand, this process is reflected in different types of texts, such as Statius' poems, Martial's epigrams, or Pliny's letters. On the other hand, a professionalization of the literary scene seems to be involved as well, with literary products being commissioned for the self-display of the addressee, which is why this kind of literature is decidedly occasion-bound. The poets operate as professional poets, since they receive a reward for their commissioned (or at least expected) works. Finally, this professionalization can be seen in the fact that it is being institutionalized in certain fields: here, for instance, the institution of the poetic games under Nero and Domitian as well as the first state chair of rhetoric under Vespasian³¹ should be mentioned.

Especially alongside traditional forms of prestige and the ostentatious display of luxury, this type of literature provided Rome's cultural elite with opportunities to distinguish themselves from other members of their group. Still, within the surviving texts we can discover discrepancies, since a person opting for the intellectual version of prestige (usually in addition to the other material options) can choose between Martial's and Statius' model. Let us now juxtapose these two poets.³²

Martial produces short but numerous poems. If we consider a performance prior to the actual book publication, the symposium is the most likely place.³³

31 Quintilian in 78 CE (Conte [1994] 512).

32 See also Rosati, pp. 64–8, 71–2 and Roman, pp. 444–61 in this volume, and Dominik (forthcoming).

33 Nauta (2002) 93–105 names possible reception contexts.

One single epigram hardly has enough room for detailed description. Thus, the refinement of the poeticized object or event needs to be reduced to the essential. The effect of the epigram is encapsulated in its punch line. In the case of the published book, one epigram is closely surrounded by many others, and the series drowns the singular. At the same time, however, it also directs its reception: Flaccus' personality was shaped by the fact that his epigrams kept on being interrelated with similar topics.³⁴ Moreover, the epigrams' addressees are numerous. Although Martial has prefatory epistles in prose,³⁵ these do not aim at interconnecting all the addressees of the book. Martial nevertheless employs this technique now and then. Analogous to the topics and addressees of the epigrams, the flamboyant self-presentation of the poet Martial embraces the whole gamut from the low client to the self-confident poet.

In contrast, Statius' *Silvae* with their form of a "long poem" provide sufficient space for detailed description. Hence, the individual poems are independently effective, since one single poem already works on its own due to its length—either as showcased or presented poem. Overall, the *Silvae* poems are far less numerous than the *Epigrams*, with the result that the single addressee comes more to the fore. This also applies to the combination of addressees in the book, who in the prose prefaces form a corresponding coterie. Inclusion in this select group already ensures an exclusive status. This holds true even more, if one is not only the addressee of some poems, but indeed of a whole book, as in the case of Atedius Melior. Although, like Martial, Statius is present in his works as a poet, he is so in a completely different way.³⁶ The poet also belongs to the exclusive circle of the people portrayed (to varying degrees, depending on the addressee), emphatically shaping literary style and structure to the events of his addressees.

Yet, what remains true of both poets is that addressees who have discovered literary patronage as an "object" of prestige are individually rewarded for their efforts. For most addressees, a poem written by Martial or Statius provides an additional opportunity for displaying their prestigious goods to a certain audience and from a new perspective, that is, a perspective not everyone can resort to. For a few, however, who (that is the impression of the comparison) enter this code system, the friendship with a poet offers something special: it becomes a part of the work.³⁷

34 For the effect of juxtaposing Martial's epigrams, see Fitzgerald (2007) 4–7, 121–3.

35 For the prefaces, see Johannsen (2006); Rühl (2006) 216–23; Newlands (2009b) 229–31.

36 The different characteristics and functions of the poet Statius in the *Silvae* are discussed by Newlands (2002) 199–226; Zeiner (2005) 45–74; Rühl (2006) 358–70; Nauta (2008).

37 Translated by Katharina Stahn.

Gift and Society in the Works of Statius

Neil Coffee

Gift-giving is defined by the pleasure it brings to giver and receiver. This at least was the view of the foremost gift theorist of Statius' era. Early in his treatise *De Beneficiis*, the younger Seneca asks what a *beneficium* is, then answers his own question:

quid est ergo beneficium? beneuola actio tribuens gaudium capiensque tribuendo in id, quod facit, prona et sponte sua parata.

SEN. BEN. 1.6.1

So what is a *beneficium*? A kindly action that gives pleasure and takes pleasure in giving it, that is inclined to that which it accomplishes and is performed willingly.

Yet the remainder of Seneca's discussion in *De Beneficiis* demonstrates that his emphasis on pleasure as integral to the exchange of gifts and favors (*beneficia*) was largely aspirational. Gift exchange was crucial to Roman social cohesion,¹ but the institution was in danger precisely because its affective dimension was lacking. Hence Seneca's repeated exhortations to preserve the exchange of *beneficia* as something beyond the merely instrumental. So when a benefactor does not aim to aid and please a recipient, but rather gives out of duty or self-interest, he participates in a business transaction rather than a pleasurable gift exchange:

qui beneficium dat, quid proponit? prodesse ei, cui dat, et uoluptati esse. si, quod uoluit, efficit peruenitque ad me animus eius ac mutuo gaudio adfecit, tulit, quod petit. non enim in uicem aliquid sibi reddi uoluit; aut non fuit beneficium sed negotiatio.

SEN. BEN. 2.31.2

1 *De beneficiis dicendum est et ordinanda res quae maxime humanam societatem alligat* ("we must discuss benefits and analyze the most important principle that holds human society together," Sen. Ben. 1.4.2).

What is someone who confers a benefit trying to accomplish? Nothing other than to aid and delight the recipient. If the giver does what he or she intends, conveys that intention to me, and creates shared pleasure, then the giver has achieved the desired goal. For the giver did not set out to receive something in return. To do so would have been a business transaction rather than gift giving.

Receivers fixated on their obligation to repay must try to cultivate and display some joy to their benefactors (*Ben.* 2.22.1). Seneca likewise condemns anyone who values a friend just for her utility.²

Statius did not engage in such open philosophical discussion in his writings, but he was well aware of the conventions surrounding gifts and the distance between ideal and real gift exchanges. In one of his more earthy moments, Statius launches a set of hendecasyllables against his friend Grypus, taking him to task for sending him *libellum . . . pro libello* ("a book in exchange for a book," *Silv.* 4.9.1–2). Statius' feigned outrage is grounded in Seneca's principle that *reiciendi genus est protinus aliud in uicem mittere et munus munere expungere* ("it is tantamount to rejection to send an equivalent gift back immediately and cancel the first gift with the second," *Ben.* 4.40.4).³ Statius jocularly sinks to Grypus' level in order to calculate the value (*computemus*, *Silv.* 4.9.6) of the two books. He declares that the volume of moldy speeches by the tyrant-killer Brutus (5–23) that Grypus sent is scarcely equivalent to his handsomely presented poems. So even when Grypus resorts to an indecorous calculation of the value of gifts, he gets it wrong.⁴ Statius' jest shows his awareness of the fine points of the problem that Seneca locates in the very definition of gift

2 *Ista quam tu describis negotiatio est, non amicitia, quae ad commodum accedit, quae quid consecutura sit spectat* ("that interaction you describe that looks to advantage and outcome is a business undertaking, not friendship," *Sen. Ep.* 9.10). See also *Sen. Ep.* 2.10.3, 3.3.1, 3.17.3, 4.29.3, 6.13.2.

3 Cf. Bourdieu (1977) 6–7: "In every society it may be observed that, if it is not to constitute an insult, the counter-gift must be *deferred* and *different*, because the immediate return of an exactly identical object clearly amounts to a refusal. . . . To betray one's haste to be free of an obligation one has incurred, and thus to reveal too overtly one's desire to pay off services rendered or gifts received, so as to be quits, is to denounce the initial gift retrospectively as motivated by the intention of obliging one."

4 *Sed certa uelut aequus in statera, | nil mutas, sed idem mihi rependis* ("but you seem to be trying to weigh judiciously on a precise scale: you don't change anything, but give me back the same," *Silv.* 4.9.46–7). Nauta (2002) 205 remarks that "Statius here takes up the tradition of the Saturnalian poetry of Catullus and Martial, which, in accordance with the general character of the festival, offered playful treatments of symmetry and reciprocity."

exchange: giver and receiver must act out of pleasure, rather than from a perfunctory sense of duty or, worse still, a desire for advantage.

The banter with Grypus is just one of many occasions throughout his works where Statius reflects on the exchange of benefactions. Together these references constitute a response to the socioeconomic conditions of his society in the mode of illustrative poet rather than analytical philosopher. This chapter will focus on Statius' main contribution to Roman gift discourse, a broader ideal of gift exchange with pleasure at its heart. The poet's ideal is consonant with Seneca's observations, but infused with a high value placed on aesthetic pleasure and an interest in cultivating and celebrating social relationships in verse. This ideal is articulated primarily in the *Silvae*. I begin with the social context that provided the conditions for Statius' new ideal, and how Statius reflects these conditions rather darkly in the *Thebaid*.

Give and Take to Make a Living

To some extent, the perspectives that Statius offers follow naturally from his personal circumstances. Statius was an ambitious poet who strove to advance his career and vied with others in poetic contests (*Silv.* 3.5, 4.2, 5.3). His talents brought him into contact with members of the wealthy elite, including the emperor Domitian. He cultivated relationships with these men through his poetry: all but four of the thirty-two poems that make up the *Silvae* are dedicated to his elite associates.⁵ Statius was not rich, however,⁶ but benefited from the favors of his patrons in order to maintain his social position and to promote his work.⁷ In the *Silvae*, Statius not only gives evidence of these patronage relationships, but also attempts to influence their dynamics; he works to enhance the reputation and status of his patrons while promoting his own status relative to them.⁸ Statius thus had the deep involvement in gift relations inevitable for those in the upper echelons of Roman society, but he depended

5 Nauta (2002) 195.

6 Nauta (2002) 203.

7 I follow Saller's (1982) definition of patronage as a reciprocal, asymmetrical relationship of extended duration. Nauta (2002) 1–34, 193–248 concludes that Statius' relationship with his benefactors met this definition.

8 Nauta (2002) 295–308 writes of Statius' strategy of "apology" for and "advertisement" of his patrons. Zeiner (2005) elaborates on this argument by invoking Bourdieu's notion of "distinction," reading Statius as a creator of social and cultural capital for his patrons and himself. See also Rühl, pp. 91–105 in this volume.

much more significantly on those relations than did the wealthy *nobiles* he mingled with. This dependence was rather precarious, however. Statius seems not to have enjoyed anything like the steady favor that Horace enjoyed with Maecenas, or Ovid with Messalla.

The dynamics of gift and favor in Statius' life and poetic production are singularly apparent in the prose preface to book 5 of the *Silvae*. Unlike the other prefaces, which introduce whole books of poetry, this preface is a personal letter to the imperial freedman Abascantus in which Statius introduces a poem of consolation for Abascantus' deceased wife:⁹

omnibus affectibus prosequenda sunt bona exempla, cum publice prosint. pietas, quam Priscillae tuae praestas, et morum tuorum pars, et nulli non conciliare te, praecipue marito, potest. uxorem enim uiuam amare *uoluptas* est, defunctam religio. ego tamen huic operi non ut unus e turba nec tantum quasi *officiosus* adsilui. amaui enim uxorem meam Priscilla et amando fecit mihi illam probatiorem; post hoc *ingratus* sum, si lacrimas tuas transeo. praeterea latus omne diuinae domus semper demereri pro mea mediocritate conitor. nam qui bona fide deos colit, amat et sacerdotes. sed quamuis propiorem usum *amicitiae* tuae iampridem cuperem, mallem tamen nondum inuenisse materiam.

SILV. 5 PRAEF. 1–13

We should try with all of our hearts to honor good models, since these benefit our community. The loyalty you show to Priscilla, a fixture of your character, earns the admiration of everyone, particularly every husband. It is a joy to love your wife while she lives; when she has passed, it is a sacred duty. For my part I did not respond to your situation just because many others did, or because I felt obliged. Priscilla loved my wife, and in doing so made her even more admirable in my eyes, so I would seem ungrateful if I overlooked your tears. Also, I always try according to my humble abilities to be of service to every part of the divine household, since whoever treats the gods with good faith cherishes their priests as well. Yet although I have for some time desired a closer friendship with you, I only wish an occasion had not presented itself so soon.

In the letter, Statius modulates with delicacy among various dimensions of gift exchange. He invokes pleasure (*uoluptas*) as an important part of a husband's

9 Further discussion at Nauta (2002) 193–4.

personal relationship with his wife, and so primes Abascantus to think of pleasure as part of his relationship with Statius.¹⁰ He takes pains to stress that his poem of consolation for the death of Abascantus' wife was not composed out of duty (*officiosus*), just to lay Abascantus under an obligation. Instead, Statius emphasizes his existing personal relationship with Abascantus through his wife. He wishes for a friendship (*amicitia*) where he and Abascantus continue a cycle of giving (and so are not *ingratus* ["ungrateful"] to each other) that is motivated by the same sort of emotional ties enjoyed by their wives. In the end, we do not know whether Statius' wish for a personal relationship with Abascantus was fulfilled, but we can see the terms in which this wish was cast. They involved the careful balancing of a possible trade in favors with the prospect of a friendly relationship in which personal ties, good will, and shared enjoyment were important experiences.

Gift practices are thus fundamental to Statius' livelihood, but nevertheless undertaken through a subtle and varied discourse that involves consideration of emotion and care for social relations. The careful construction of his appeal testifies to the fundamental power imbalance between Statius and the imperial household. More broadly, it also reflects the fundamental tendency of Roman gift discourse to favor the social superior. If we were to ask Statius' contemporary Martial his view on gift relations, we could sum up his response in three words: gifts are traps. The epigrammatist explores many facets of gift exchange, but his repeated theme is the danger of gift-giving. By accepting a gift one can become bound to the giver and vulnerable to exploitation.¹¹ Martial's more cynical view derives in part from his position a few rungs down the social ladder from Statius (no dinner invitations from Domitian, alas). As a rule, Romans of higher social status could better exploit the ambiguities of unquantified gift value and expectations of return, so they viewed gift exchange (and patronage) more favorably than their social inferiors.

10 I have in mind the sort of priming demonstrated by modern experiments in behavioral economics. Kahneman (2011) 55 describes an experiment in which subjects were placed in a room where a computer screensaver in the background showed images of money notionally unrelated to the task the subjects were to perform. In one such exercise, when experimenters then dropped pencils on the floor in an apparent accident, subjects primed to think of money, and so, presumably, self-interest, picked up fewer pencils to help the experimenters than did those who were not so primed. Within Statius' larger relationship with Abascantus, his rhetorical priming here works in the opposite direction, toward establishing notions of a generous relationship by evoking feelings of pleasure and good will.

11 Spisak (1998).

This view is evident in the exercise of gift conventions for advantage by Roman elites. The younger Pliny recounts that when his grape harvest went bad, he decided to give the wholesalers who were obliged to buy it a rebate relative to their investments and on-time payment history. The terms in which he describes this interaction are telling. Each dealer received a gift (*donatus*) from him and he himself acted with considerable generosity (*gratia*). Pliny's claimed generosity seems belied by the close of the letter, however, where he states that the point of the rebates was to make each dealer more obliged (*obligator*) to him in the future (*Ep.* 8.2, esp. 8.2.3, 7–8), and so bring more favorable conditions, including better prices for his vintage. Pliny is writing in instrumental terms of the advantage he gained from this exchange. But if he wanted better prices in return for his rebates, why not just negotiate a contract? Because the gift structure effectively gave Pliny everything a contract would and more. Pliny could be reasonably confident that his “investment” of gift rebates would be returned, in part because ingratitude carried a strong social stigma. We find evidence for this stigma in Roman elite fantasizing about laws to punish ungrateful freedmen and others.¹² A social group incensed enough to consider such laws would surely first have brought social and economic pressure to bear. Wealthy upstarts might nevertheless engage in flagrant acts of ingratitude, but Pliny's humble wholesalers were in no position to disregard acts of generosity by one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the empire. So by invoking a gift relationship, Pliny established a set of obligations nearly as secure as a contract. In addition, he made a show of good will that could encourage further flexibility in his favor, both on the narrow issue of prices for his vintage and on a broader set of issues that might come up with the wholesalers and the wider community. This is not to discount the possibility of true, affective generosity on the part of Pliny. He himself testifies to his own sense of liberality in self-scrutinizing discussions that it would

12 Gaius and Nero confiscated bequests from those deemed insufficiently grateful (Suet. *Calig.* 38.2, *Ner.* 32.2). Nero entertained requests from senators to punish ungrateful freedmen (Tac. *Ann.* 13.26–7). The elder Seneca refers to debates over a law against ingratitude in declamation exercises: *noui declamatores . . . et hanc quaestionem in hac controuersia fecerunt: an inter uiros et uxores data beneficia ingrati lege teneantur: non est beneficium sed officium facere quod debeas* (“Recent declaimers posed the following question in this controuersia as well: whether benefits exchanged between husbands and wives should be subject to a law on ingratitude. It is not a benefit, however, but a duty to do what one ought,” *Controv.* 2.5.13). The younger Seneca shows that the notion of such a law was at least conceivable by arguing that it should not be implemented (*Ben.* 3.6.1). A law against ingratitude is recorded at *Inst. Iust.* 2.7.2. See further Manning (1986).

be reductive to dismiss.¹³ The point is rather that Roman gift-giving discourse and practices inherently favored superiors, providing them with social scripts that even a philosophically minded Pliny would naturally fall into, and even Martial, friend and protégé of Pliny, could find oppressive.

The Perils of the Roman Gift: The *Thebaid*

What then did Statius, deeply embedded in these structures of gift exchange as he was, have to say about them? One answer is supplied by the poet's epic tale of familial strife. The most conspicuous gift exchange in all of the *Thebaid* is also the most noxious. The necklace Vulcan creates for Harmonia, a beautiful ornament designed to sow discord, is passed down among the Thebans until it reaches the hands of Polynices, who offers it to his bride Argia, daughter of Adrastus. At *Thebaid* 2.273–88, the poet provides a description of the necklace that emphasizes the beauty and value of its construction, including its “emeralds glowing with mysterious light, adamant engraved with baleful figures, and dreadful gold from the fleece of Phrixus” (*arcano florentes igne zmaragdus . . . infaustas percussum adamantia figuras . . . dirum Phrixei uelleris aurum*, 276–81). Although generations of nobles covet the necklace, it is devoid of charm (*gratia*) because Pasithea, the chief of the Graces (*Gratiae*), took no part in its construction, nor did Beauty and Cupid (286–7), only malignant divinities. Eriphyle yearns to possess Argia's necklace, and eventually receives it in exchange for persuading her husband Amphiaraus to go to war. Her act is condemned by the narrator (*impia*, “faithless woman,” 303) and Amphiaraus himself, who, standing in judgment before the lord of the underworld, protests that he was “sold out for wicked gold” (*iniquo uenditus auro*, 8.104).¹⁴

In effect, the story of Harmonia's necklace casts Martial's critique of gift giving in epic and mythological terms, providing a vivid illustration of the gift used as a snare. The punch of Martial's epigrams comes from their lampoons of individuals, so they tend to deal with binary gift exchanges. The length of mythological epic, its generational view, and its broad political landscapes allow for scenarios that are more complex.¹⁵ In this case, the downfall

13 E.g., *Ep.* 1.8. See Griffin (2007).

14 For further discussion of the necklace and its intertextual origins, see McNelis (2007) 50–75 and Chinn (2011).

15 Statius draws attention to this complexity by noting that it was a long series of evils (*longa est series . . . malorum*, 2.267) that led to the giving of Harmonia's necklace as a gift (*donis*, 2.268). The phrasing echoes the opening of the epic, where he observes that there is a long

of Amphiaraus results from a gift trap worked at several removes: Polynices effectively employs Argia to manipulate Eriphyle into entangling Amphiaraus in a military alliance. Even in the binary interaction at the end of this chain, the mechanics are different from what we typically see in Martial. Eriphyle does not ensnare Amphiaraus *with* a gift, but rather *for* a gift, the necklace she will receive from Argia. The structural difference arises from a different social context: this is not a public interaction between social unequals, but a private interaction between wife and husband. Eriphyle does not need to offer anything material, but can implicitly invoke all her past and future contributions to her marriage to gain the favor she seeks from Amphiaraus. Statius has brought us deep into the function of exchange and favors across public and private spheres, with an effect novel in the epic tradition. His recounting of the provenance of the gift from the anvils of Vulcan to Eriphyle echoes gift lineages from Homer onward, and in particular, the ill-omened gifts Aeneas gives to Dido (*Aen.* 1.647–55) associated with disasters at Troy.¹⁶ Like Vergil, Statius suggests that the relationships created over time through gift exchange and particular gifts are not always as supportive and beneficial as they appear to be in the Homeric poems. But Statius stresses that it is deception in giving a gift, rather than just a troubled lineage, that leads to disaster. The emblem of this deception is the eerie necklace itself. It has a false and interrupted beauty, with lovely stones and metals strangely devoid of loveliness.

The problems of gift exchange represented by Harmonia's necklace are writ large over the course of the *Thebaid*. From the build-up to the war, to the battle for Thebes and its aftermath, the poem articulates a descent from the values of home and allegiance (as in the weddings of book 2), to misplaced heroism and the crime of fratricidal slaughter. The pleasure that Seneca says should characterize gift exchange naturally has little room to flourish in this environment. We find nothing like the generosity and hospitality shown by the Phaeacians to Odysseus (*Hom. Od.* 7.153–206, 13.1–92). Statius mainly follows epic conventions that conjoin gift giving with political acts such as the forming of alliances, the distribution of spoils, and the placating of divinities, all generally to little good effect.

series of Theban events going back in time (*longa retro series*, 1.7), which he will not fully recount, leading to his story of fraternal conflict. In both cases, Statius signals his awareness of the full mythological tradition and its poetic treatments, as well as his awareness that the human situations these stories represent have manifold dimensions, from which he will select only a few for his narrative.

16 See discussion at Coffee (2009b) 52–5.

The *Thebaid* is not entirely without affirmative moments of epic gift-giving. One of these is the reception Adrastus affords to Polynices and Tydeus after they arrive at his doorstep in book 1. Epic gift exchange most often takes place as part of a relationship of *hospitium*, or guest-friendship, and Adrastus cements such a relationship with his quarreling guests from the outset. The pugnacious chieftains are referred to as guests soon after their arrival (*hospitiis*, *Theb.* 1.682) and their guest-friendship with Adrastus then takes shape (*incepta . . . hospitium*, 2.146–7). Adrastus himself is a pious man: we later learn that he has participated in personal exchanges of gifts with the gods (he receives a horse as a gift: *dono*, 6.314). When his daughter Argia asks that he help her husband Polynices conquer Thebes, Adrastus generously, but misguidedly, yields to her entreaties to go to war. Statius describes this grant as a “woeful offering” (*inlaetabile munus*, 3.706). The greatest gifts of Adrastus, however, are the hands of his two daughters offered in marriage to Tydeus and Polynices. Deipyle and Argia carry themselves with nobility (*honos*, 2.241). The wedding is a happy gathering (*laeto . . . coetu*, 2.214) and cause for great joy (*laetitia*, 2.244). It seems a rare moment of Senecan pleasure in a setting of generous giving, but there is no specific mention of gifts here. The weddings rather serve the practical purpose of creating an alliance to help reclaim Thebes (2.199–200). Adrastus thus seems to balance practicality and generosity in his gift giving in ways traditionally decorous for an epic king.¹⁷ Unfortunately, he is rewarded only by being dragged further into war, until he must ultimately abandon a Polynices resolved to kill his own brother Eteocles (11.439–46). When family affection itself cannot stop murder, when, as Tydeus exclaims, “loyalty is dead” (*nusquam pietas*, 3.350), the weaker social force of gift bonds has little chance of imposing restraint, much less bringing lasting joy.

If the wedding scene recalls the lighter moments of gift culture from earlier epic, other gifts in the *Thebaid* follow the disastrous example of Harmonia’s necklace. The Argive women succeed in asking Juno to lull the Theban forces into a helpless sleep in return for prayers and the gift (*dono*, 10.56) of a precious robe. Once invoked, Juno is not willing to see such a great gift wasted (*nec periisse precatus / tantaque dona uelit*, 71–2). There is no pleasure here, however, only a sense of duty on the part of Juno. Indeed, “Pleasure” (*Voluptas*, 101) is herself among the divinities to be found in the palace of Sleep when Juno calls upon the god of slumber to subdue the Thebans. In the ensuing Argive massacre of the sleeping Thebans (262–346), pleasure comes from unlimited easy slaughter (*uoluptas / caedis inexhaustae*, 266–7), a prospect the seer Thiodamas offers to incite his comrades, rather than in affection and

17 The closest model is Vergil’s Evander. See McNelis (2007) 27–9.

allegiance. Generosity in the theater of war likewise fails in the case of Menoeceus, the son of Creon who attempts to save Thebes through a *deuotio*, or ritual suicide.¹⁸ Menoeceus tries to draw the gods, and particularly Apollo, into the sort of contractual gift relationship Romans typically practiced with the divine¹⁹ and that Juno observed, offering his life in return for the salvation of Thebes. In anticipation of his suicide, he calls on the gods to “give the joy of release to Thebes that [he] contracted and paid for with the lavish payment of his body’s blood” (*date gaudia Thebis, / quae pepigi et toto quae sanguine prodigus emi*, 763–4). The only pleasure that the gods of the *Thebaid* certainly wish to effect is that which they themselves take in creating and witnessing the spectacles of human violence that bring the “mad pleasure of the sword” (*ferri . . . insana uoluptas*, 7.22), as Jupiter puts it.

Through the narratives of Adrastus, Juno, and Menoeceus, Statius elaborates over the course of the *Thebaid* the dangers of gift relationships and the broader phenomenon of reciprocity encapsulated in the story of Harmonia’s necklace. The fate of Adrastus suggests that even gift relationships that begin in good faith on both sides can entangle parties in harmful situations. Gifts that are efficacious for the exchanging parties can be seen on a broader view to contribute only to useless destruction, as in the case of Juno’s grant to the Argive women of rendering Thebans helpless for slaughter. The failure of Menoeceus shows that the gods cannot be relied upon to reciprocate even the greatest of gestures in their direction, making them models of faithlessness in gift relations. Statius’ exploration of gifts in the *Thebaid* thus takes the concerns of Seneca and Martial for the personal and practical dangers of Roman gift relations and sets them in a cosmic and mythological epic context. By distancing and universalizing these problems, Statius provides a duly complex counterpart to the respectively philosophical and playful observations of Seneca and Martial, one where the mythological drama of gods, kings, and warfare suggests that gift exchange at the highest levels of public affairs is simultaneously necessary and unreliable.

An Alternative Ideal: The *Silvae*

Moving from the *Thebaid* to the *Silvae* presents us with an apparent paradox. Whereas the mythological *Thebaid* addresses real problems of Roman gift

18 Menoeceus’ father Creon refers to his son’s “ritually sacrificed life” (*deuotumque caput*, 10.794).

19 Beard *et al.* (1998) 34.

exchange, the apparently real-life situations of the *Silvae* idealize gift relations to the point of fantasy. The discrepancy originates partly from Statius' social position and its influence on his poetic career. The mythological setting of the *Thebaid* ensured that any allusion to the failures of the gift system would not reflect on the investment his patrons had in it, while the poems of the *Silvae* set out to praise precisely these patrons and their values. Generic conventions—the traditional pessimism of epic and the buoyancy of encomium—coincided with these personal circumstances to shape how Statius rendered gifts in his poetry.

Statius does not simply reflect these social and poetic conditions, however. He transcends them in order to envision a more fulfilling practice of gift exchange than the one he saw around him. The conditions for such a vision emerge in the *Silvae*, where the exuberance of Statius' style corresponds with the portrayal of wealth and luxury as sources of decorous delight. In earlier republican and imperial authors, earned wealth was generally treated with skepticism, if not condemnation.²⁰ Luxury was a vice that doomed individuals and nations; money, pleasure, and ruin were inextricably linked.²¹ In the *Silvae*, by contrast, luxury is associated with pleasurable, refined living.²² When Statius celebrates venerable Roman frugality, it is not as the sort of virtue the elder Cato would have approved of, leading to a chaste and productive farm household. Ideal frugality for Statius is rather a vigilance in financial dealings that provides the means to a comfortable and luxurious life.²³ Shared appreciation of beautiful villas, seaside property, sculpture, poetry, and other pleasures does not threaten society, but instead fosters a community of intellect and taste leading to social cohesion.²⁴

Statius evokes these pleasures not only through the fineness of his poetic compositions and the delights that they describe, but also by repeated direct reference to the pleasure that he and his associates experience, much of it arising from gift-giving. Statius frequently celebrates gifts in the *Silvae*: he represents himself as giving his poems gladly as gifts to patrons (e.g., *Silv.* 2.3.63,

20 Cicero cites the elder Cato's extreme equation of moneylending with murder (Cic. *Off.* 2.89). Cicero himself tries to make some ideological accommodation for the money-earning activities of the *equites* and other elites, but still thinks it best to convert money into more traditionally aristocratic landholdings (1.151).

21 See Edwards (1993) 176, from which the last phrase is taken.

22 Newlands (2002) 162; Zeiner (2005) 109–134, esp. 131–4; Rosati (2006) 52–3. Cf. Gibson, pp. 123–38 in this volume.

23 Newlands (2002) 187–8 (*ad Silv.* 2.2.); Nauta (2002) 229; Zeiner (2005) 132.

24 Newlands (2002) 183; Rosati (2006) 57.

3.3.38); he admires gifts given by others, such as Domitian's benefaction of roads to the Roman people (4 *praef.* 7–10); and he honors gifts to and from the gods (3.4 *passim*, 4.8.24, 5.2.147). And just as giving-giving is part of a pleasurable life, so too pleasure is integral to the ideal of gift giving. Statius establishes this relationship from the very beginning of the collection. At the opening of the first prose preface, he describes his process of composition as accompanied by “a certain pleasure in hurrying” (*quadam festinandi uoluptate*, *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 3–4). We learn from the same preface that the poems were composed to honor his acquaintances, and executed immediately following upon some request or occasion, possibly in the very presence of the dedicatee (e.g., on Claudius Etruscus' baths, *Silv.* 1.5). Pleasure takes the form of the excitement of composing to a deadline, but arises equally from the anticipation of the delighted response of the poem's recipient.

Or so it would seem. A more reductive reading might suggest that Statius is anticipating a material reward, rather than the delight that he will bring to his reader. But another poem, *Silvae* 2.2, suggests that Statius was at least at times involved in a joyful experience of gift giving. In this poem, Statius gives an elegant description of Pollius Felix's villa at Surrentum, including its views of the sea, vast size, and exotic marble facing. Statius exclaims repeatedly on the pleasure (*uoluptas*) the villa conveys (33, 73). He closes with praise for Pollius and his wife Polla, describing the latter in the following verses:

non frontem uertere minae, sed candida semper
gaudia et in uultu curarum ignara *uoluptas*;
 non tibi sepositas infelix strangulat arca
 diuitias *auidi*que animum *dispendia* torquent
fenoris: expositi census et docta fruendi temperies.

SILV. 2.2.149–54

No cares have troubled your brow, but always
 glowing joy and a pleasure untouched by worries
 are visible in your face. You have no stingy strongbox
 that holds back hidden wealth, nor are you obsessed
 with potential loss of greedy interest. Your wealth is on view for all,
 and you use it with moderation born of experience.

Statius presents the pleasure (*gaudia*) and joy (*uoluptas*) that Polla projects as complementary to freedom from miserliness (*auidi . . . fenoris*). Such praise of a patron's generosity would seem to be an indirect invitation to offer gifts to the poet. Just as the outlays Polla and Pollius made on their splendid villa

were prudent because they yielded many delights, the suggestion runs, so might a wise beneficence toward Statius produce lovely poetry. If this is all that Statius means to accomplish, however, why contrast miserliness with pleasure (*gaudia, uoluptas*), rather than with its obvious opposite, generosity? Statius is continuing his theme of pleasure from earlier in the poem, to be sure, but what is achieved by associating these earlier delights with the joy that Polla radiates? I would suggest that Statius is presenting a two-way causality: Polla's joyful spirit both results from and contributes to her habit of using her money liberally.²⁵ Her gifts give joy, as the delights of the villa prove. And she herself becomes joyful in the giving.

In this respect, the mutual pleasure in gift giving is just as Seneca describes. But Statius does not present a binary exchange transaction in the discrete form of the philosopher's precept. Polla is not said to give anything directly to Statius, nor is Statius' enjoyment of the villa traced precisely to Polla's willingness to create it. Instead, the delight that Statius takes in the villa and the pleasure that Polla receives from her generosity are linked in a broader cycle of giving. The creation of the villa becomes a generous act of forethought on the part of the married couple loosely related to Statius' enjoyment, with both in turn loosely connected to Polla's pleasant radiance. The very diffusion of these relationships of giving and pleasure ensure that none of them can be interpreted as self-interested exchange, least of all on the part of the poet, but instead appear to be carried out for fully generous motives in a spirit of pleasant friendship.²⁶

Statius uses the key gift exchange term *gratia* in the poem in ways that embody this dynamic. In the context of Roman gift exchange, *gratia* has two fundamental meanings: a positive disposition toward another person, or the recognition or feeling of a favor due to another. A third separate but related meaning is the "charm" of a person or object.²⁷ In the context of *Silvae* 2.2 and

25 Conversely, precise exchanges that exclude generosity also exclude pleasure. In *Silv.* 3.3, Statius praises the deceased father of Claudius Etruscus for his careful accounting of Roman state finances, including tributes from allies. The good fiscal watchdog "put pleasure from his mind" (*animoque exclusa uoluptas*, 3.3.106).

26 The situation described by Statius is close to what Sahlins (1968) 140 refers to as "generalized reciprocity," where individuals give to others with a sense not that the particular recipient will provide a return, but that the donor will be treated similarly in the future. An example from the world of epic is the practice of *xenia-hospitium*, where a host will offer a noble traveler like Odysseus food and lodging with no expectation of seeing him again, but with the thought that he would be similarly received on any journey.

27 OLD s.v. *gratia*.

its reflection on the generosity of Pollius and Polla, when Statius mentions *gratia*, he necessarily evokes the notion of a gift relationship. When he then uses *gratia* throughout the poem to denote “charm,” he is able to whisper of favors between himself and his patrons at the same time. The charm he writes of is that of Polla and the villa, whom he assimilates to one another in their grace as much as in the pleasure that they evince: Polla’s grace attracts Statius to her villa, which he finds charming (*gratia Pollae*, 2.2.10; *gratia . . . loci*, 17).²⁸

By evoking the instrumental sense of gift transactions inherent in the word *gratia* only to subsume it under a notion of charm, Statius makes a performance of pleasure (in the form of charm) superseding instrumentality. This sublimation of the process of gift exchange in a poem to his patrons could amount simply to Statius mystifying his pursuit of pure self-interest. Such a reading risks oversimplifying the experience of the poet and his associates, however. As Bourdieu writes:

In reducing the economy to its objective reality, economism annihilates the specificity located precisely in the socially maintained discrepancy between the misrecognized or, one might say, socially repressed, objective truth of economic activity, and the social representation of production and exchange.²⁹

The “objective reality” that Bourdieu refers to is an underlying trade of goods or services, which is “misrecognized” by being appreciated in another, culturally specific interpretation. Bourdieu’s formulation is helpful in alerting us to the danger of reductionism when looking at the gift exchange process. A reading from the perspective of pure economism in the case of Statius’ relationship with Pollius and Polla can easily deny Statius the potential for any sort of emotion of generosity or fellow-feeling.³⁰ The antidote to such reductionism is to give full weight to the descriptions of experience. When Statius expresses his

28 Other examples refer to the “grace” of Ursus’ lost slave (*Silv.* 2.6.41) and of Lucan’s wife Polla (2.7.86).

29 Bourdieu (1977) 172.

30 In fact, the choice of terms made by Bourdieu (1977) 172 contributes to this danger. Seneca, his predecessor in gift theory, could not avoid violating his own injunction to Lucilius not to think of gifts in financial terms (*Ep.* 94): see discussion in Griffin (2003b). It may be inevitable that the measurable movement of goods and services, as the more discrete and knowable part of a gift transaction, should be represented as its real foundation, with the affective and social dimensions a mere overlay. But Bourdieu reinforces this tendency rather than mitigating it when he refers to the movement of goods and services in the gift transaction as its “objective truth.”

delight in Pollius' villa and his admiration for the couple that built it, we must acknowledge that he is cultivating his relationship with a benefactor. At the same time, however, we can also allow that the feelings of aesthetic pleasure and admiration that Statius writes of could at least be close to those that he experienced. On this reading, Statius is representing a relationship of generosity in which he felt genuinely grateful, and in which he in fact experienced and wished to represent a pleasure in the good will of his friends.

In other poems as well, the warmth and intimacy with which Statius expresses the pleasures of generosity suggest something more than mere social performance for his patrons. When he writes of another villa, belonging to Manilius Vopiscus, Statius describes the goddess Voluptas as having guided the hand of Vopiscus as architect (*Silv.* 1.3.9). But it is Nature herself who more generously (*largius*, 16) indulges her creativity and gives the gift that brings the delights of the villa into being, by creating a location in Tivoli that gives the house cool breezes in summer and splendid views (1–33): all of which bring delight to Statius' spirit (*mente . . . gaudia*, 13–14). Statius closes the poem by imputing to Vopiscus himself the ability to give delight not only through his architecture but also through his poetic compositions. Statius asks why he and others should fail to appreciate the pleasure near at hand that Vopiscus' poetry can provide (*cur oculis sordet uicina uoluptas?*, 98). Just as the pleasure that Statius takes in the villa is figured as both aesthetic and social (it is a delight and nature's gift), so Statius alludes to the aesthetic pleasure that Vopiscus provides in sharing his poems with friends. Of course, as we read Statius' words, Juvenal's first satire complaining about the volume of bad verse he was forced to endure may come before our minds and suggest that Statius is only flattering a rich poetaster. There is no reason we must believe this, but even if we accept this premise, it is still possible that Statius was in fact gratified by his friend's willingness to share his work. Whatever Vopiscus' talents might have been, Statius' notion of an idealized gift relationship as based on shared pleasure stands as a consistent feature of his collection.

When Statius extends this ideal to poems addressed to the distant *princeps* Domitian, it necessarily becomes less a description of a familiar gift relationship and more a model for one tacitly proffered to the Roman ruler. In *Silvae* 3.4, Statius celebrates the occasion when Domitian's favorite slave Earinus followed Greek ritual in presenting his first hair cuttings as a gift (*munus*, 80) to a god, in this case Asclepius. Statius represents Earinus himself as an "incomparable gift" (*donum immane*, 37) both from the east and from Venus (12–20). Statius emphasizes pleasure as the dominant affect involved in the poem's various exchanges. At the opening of the poem, Domitian is said to have taken great pleasure in receiving the gift of Earinus from the gods

(*uoluptas*, 20), and Venus declares that, of all the things on earth, nothing is more delightful (*nihil... tam dulce*, 39) than Earinus. For his part, Earinus hopes that Domitian will be able to rejoice (*gaudeat*, 105) at the favor Asclepius shows him in return for Earinus' dedicated locks. Here as well, Statius invokes the ordinary cycle of gift and counter-gift with the word *gratia* only to suggest that "grace" should be the principal experience in gift exchange. Indeed, we find the goddess Gratia herself serving with Venus as hairdresser to the locks of Earinus, ensuring that they are as beautiful as possible before they are given to Asclepius (82–3). Gratia ("Charm") thus increases the *gratia* ("good will") that Asclepius and Domitian will recognize and requite, but the former is present in the poem, the latter only implied.³¹

Statius' relationship with Domitian was of course considerably more distant than what he experienced with Pollius and Polla. The situation of Earinus is heavily mythologized, as the poem on Pollius' villa was not.³² Thus, rather than describing a relationship that he enjoys, Statius suggests—through his praise of Earinus—that pleasure is and should be at the heart of the gift relationships between the *princeps* and his subjects. At the same time, the beauty of Pollius' and Polla's seaside villa was a gift between friends and provided a delight analogous to and commingled with the pleasure of friendly exchanges. Likewise, the pleasure that Domitian takes in the company of Earinus might help inspire him in Platonic fashion to see that pleasurable amity should be a principal feature of all exchanges with his subjects. Erotic pleasures too were likely part of Domitian's relationship with Earinus.³³ Statius leaves these implicit, however, and assumes them into his focus on a broader connection between gifts and pleasure. Statius enters into this dynamic personally, with poems that offer pleasure within his own orbit of generous exchange with the *princeps*.

31 The grace of Earinus is in evidence elsewhere as well. As the Ganymede to Domitian's Jupiter, Earinus confers upon the wine that he serves his master a greater "grace" (*crescit noua gratia Baccho*, 3.4.59). Depending upon which reading we follow, Statius also refers either to the joy (*gaudia*: Courtney [1992]; Shackleton Bailey [2003]) or to the grace (*gratia*: the sole, deficient, manuscript) of the beauty of Earinus (3.4.66). Earinus might have had more gifts to give than his hair. Had Earinus not been a eunuch, he would have had not just one gift (*non unum... munus*, *Silv.* 3.4.80) to send to the god, since he would dedicated his beard as well.

32 Statius spent time writing poetry with Pollius (*Silv.* 3 *prae*f. 3–6). His extended reference to the wife of a patron as a patron in her own right is unique in the *Silvae* (Nauta [2002] 223), and suggests real friendship with the couple. On Statius' relationship with Domitian, see Nauta (2002) 327–55. The Earinus poem was solicited by Earinus himself and delivered only after some delay (*Silv.* 3 *prae*f. 16–20).

33 Rühl (2006) 342.

Conclusion

Statius consistently foregrounds the exchange of gifts and favors in his works, but with a variation that creates its own trajectory. The *Thebaid* universalizes the critiques of his contemporaries, suggesting that the deception and instrumentalization Martial and Seneca saw in personal gift practice extended to the highest levels of political affairs. The arc then veers from desperation to hope in the *Silvae*. Statius draws together his personal circumstances and the lifestyles of his patrons to form a model for relationships where the lost pleasure of gift exchange was restored. Statius' vision invites his patrons to expand their appreciation of fine living in order to encompass a rich pleasure in giving and receiving benefits, material and immaterial. In this way, the very elites most inclined to manipulate the current system to their advantage might bring to life a new, more enlightened ideal. Statius' trajectory trails off in the unfinished *Achilleid*. It is impossible to say, for example, whether the "clever gifts" (*callida dona*, *Achil.* 1.846) of arms Ulysses uses to entice Achilles to war would have created greater devastation or glory in the poet's final rendering. One suggestion lies, however, in the Greeks' choice to melt down the gifts (golden statues) of the gods (*liquescent / dona deum*, 1.424–5) to fund the expedition against Troy. Reducing the gods to coins was an option that, in Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, even the most wild-eyed of Caesar's men had only contemplated.³⁴ If a finished *Achilleid* had continued in this vein, we might have concluded that the hope expressed in the *Silvae* for a joyful and socially transformative gift exchange proved false. As it stands, Statius' oeuvre offers no summative statement on gift exchange, only testament to its central and highly problematic place in Roman society.³⁵

34 To serve Caesar, the centurion Laelius will even see to it that "the fires of the military mint will melt the statues of the gods" (*numina miscebit castrensis flamma monetae*, *Luc.* 1.380).

35 I would like to thank Neil Bernstein for his many helpful comments on this chapter.

Negative Stereotypes of Wealth in the Works of Statius

Bruce Gibson

I take as my starting point for this paper the meeting between Dante, Vergil, and Statius in the *Purgatorio*. Dante and Vergil encounter Statius in the twenty-first canto, and their conversation continues into the twenty-second, where Vergil asks Statius why he has been assigned to the area of Purgatory which is inhabited by those guilty of avarice, before expressing his surprise as follows:¹

come poté trovar dentro al tuo seno
loco avarizia, tra cotanto senno
di quanto per tua cura fosti pieno?

PURG. 22.22–4

How could avarice find a place within your
breast, among all the wisdom with which your
studies had filled you?²

Statius' reply however is that his crime was not avarice, but its opposite, liberality, and it was through reading Vergil that he realized the error of his ways, and was thus saved from the torments of the Inferno:

Or sappi ch'avarizia fu partita
troppo da me, e questa dismisura
migliaia di lunari hanno punita.
E se non fosse ch'io drizzai mia cura
quand'io intesi là dove tu chiami,
crucciato quasi a l'umana natura:
"Perché non reggi tu, o sacra fame
de l'oro, l'appetito de' mortali?"
voltando sentirei le giostre grame.

PURG. 22.34–42

¹ On Statius and Dante, see now Heslin, pp. 512–26 in this volume.

² The text and the translation of Dante's *Purgatorio* are taken from Durling and Martinez (2003).

Know then that avarice was too distant from me,
and thousands of months have punished this lack
of measure.

And had it not been that I straightened out my
desires, when I understood the place where you
cry out, almost angry at human nature:

“Why do you, O holy hunger for gold, not
govern the appetite of mortals?” I would be turning
about, feeling the grim jousts.

The idea of Statius as a spendthrift is a curious one, even if in the end he was saved from such extravagance by his reading of Vergil's poetry. As Alex Hardie has demonstrated, Statius was a product of the world of professional poetry,³ and thus dependent on success in competitions, and ultimately on private patronage as well.⁴ While Statius might not be thought of as conveying a poet's poverty in the way that Martial's writings sometimes do,⁵ many of the poems of the *Silvae* (which the historical Dante did not have access to) describe possessions that are owned not by Statius but by his friends: Statius thus experiences the trappings of wealth, but as an invited viewer. This is clearly apparent in poems where Statius engages with the emperor, as at *Silvae* 4.2.13–17, where he expresses his astonishment that he even sees Domitian (*tene ego . . . cerno iacens*, “do I see you, as I recline,” 14–16), before going on to describe the architectural splendor of Domitian's palace (18–37). But the same sense of wonder also holds true of Statius' interactions with the possessions of private individuals among his friends: thus in the poem on Novius Vindex's statue of Hercules the statue holds but is not able to sate Statius' gaze (4.6.33–4).⁶ Statius had previously remarked that he had wished that the night could have been extended (17–19), a pointer not only to the delights of Vindex's hospitality, but also to the transience of his encounter with Vindex's wealth, which can be enjoyed by the owner whenever the inclination takes him (30–1). In this sense, occasional poetry's effect is a commodification of what was previously private wealth: occasional poetry, once written down, might almost be said to steal the

3 A. Hardie (1983) 1–136.

4 On Statius and his patrons, see Nauta (2002) 193–323; Rühl, 91–105 and Coffee, 106–22 in this volume.

5 On Martial's “poverty,” see, e.g., Sullivan (1991) 26–30.

6 For similar emphasis for Statius as the viewer, cf. *Silv.* 1.3.13–15 (Statius recalls his gaze being exhausted by the miraculous qualities of Manilius Vopiscus' villa), 2.2.42–5 (on Statius' astonishment at the villa of Pollius Felix).

moment from the wealth of individuals, in a desperate attempt to hold Statius' (and his audience's) gaze on objects that are not for them.

The *Thebaid*

The reference to Vergil's epic poetry in the passage from Dante above, which provides a virtual quotation of Vergil's *quid non mortalia pectora cogis, / auri sacra fames* ("to what do you not drive mortal hearts, accursed hunger for gold," *Aen.* 3.56–7), is a reminder that a common approach towards wealth is to present it as somehow dangerous and corrupting.⁷ This comes across in a range of contexts before Statius: consider, for example, Lucan's account of how the riches of Rome were responsible for the moral decline that led to civil war (*Luc.* 1.160–7), a view that itself echoes notions more commonly found in ancient historiography that link wealth to moral decline.⁸

This kind of negative discourse about wealth has a place in the *Thebaid*. Statius mentions the theme of the deleterious effects of wealth in a complex passage in *Thebaid* 1.144–64, when describing how Oedipus' sons were not in fact fighting for huge riches: it was instead *nuda potestas* ("naked power," 150) which drove them to take up arms against each other. Here Statius engages with Lucan's earlier account of the destructive power of wealth in Rome as one of the wider social causes of the civil war of Caesar and Pompey (*Luc.* 1.158–82, esp. 160–7).⁹ The overall effect, however, of the evocation of Lucan is to emphasize still further the criminality of the two brothers, and to convey how lust for rule is an aspect of the commodification of power (note the metaphor of purchase at *Theb.* 1.163–4: *furiisque immanibus emptum / Oedipodae sedisse loco*, "horrific furies were the price paid to sit in the place of Oedipus").¹⁰ In any case Lucan's analysis of Rome unravels any attempt to establish an antithesis between the morality of poverty and that of wealth, since Lucan's earlier point about Romulus and Remus competing for power in Rome, even at a time

7 On attitudes towards Roman luxury see, e.g., Edwards (1993) 176–83, 186–90, 204–6; Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 315–55, esp. 332–3 on Tacitus' claim that the rise of men from the *municipia* and the avoidance of extravagance by Vespasian brought about a retreat from the more luxurious tastes of the earlier principate (*Ann.* 3.55).

8 See Gibson (2010) 40–3.

9 See further Coffee (2009b), 118, 132, 274–5; Gibson (2010) 42–4.

10 For suggestive discussion of "commodification" in Latin epic, see Coffee (2009b) 145–51 (on Lucan) and 191–4 (on Statius' negative portrayals of Eriphyle and Tisiphone). On concepts of reciprocity, see, e.g., Coffee (2009b) 188–91, 225–40 on the *Thebaid*; cf. Nauta (2002) 204–35, 240–4 on asymmetry and reciprocity in the *Silvae*; Seo (2008) on *Silv.* 4.9.

of poverty (Luc. 1.95–7), is effectively taken over by Statius in his analysis of Thebes.

Moreover, the *Thebaid* also throws into question wider categorizations of the past as unaffected by riches, since the presentation of material wealth and poverty is not consistent across the entire poem. Thus, in contrast to this opening image of the poverty of Thebes, Argos is characterized as wealthy, as when Eteocles asks the envoy Tydeus whether Argia, the wife of Polynices, will be able to bear life in Thebes after she has grown accustomed to “ancestral luxury” in Argos (*luxu . . . paterno*, *Theb.* 2.438). This image of the opulence of Argos also comes across in the narrative: thus at *Thebaid* 1.515–21 Statius describes the lavish preparations for a banquet hosted by Adrastus. His palace includes couches adorned with purple and gold (*ostro . . . auroque*, 1.517), and lamps of gold (*auratis . . . lychnis*, 521). The detail of purple and gold may be felt to be traditional (cf., e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 12.126, where the commanders in battle are *auro . . . ostroque superbi*, “proud in gold and purple”), but it is worth noting that examples can be found which suggest that such opulence is open to question. Thus Vergil in the *Georgics* uses *ostro* and *auro* in describing the desires for wealth that moral corruption engenders:

hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque penatis,
ut gemma bibat et Sarrano dormiat ostro;
conduit opes alius defossoque incubat auro . . .

VERG. *G.* 2.505–7

This man attacks a city and wretched homes with destruction, so that he may drink from a bejeweled cup, and sleep on the purple of Phoenicia; another man buries riches, and looms over his buried gold . . .

The pairing is also used in the *Aeneid* in descriptions of the material wealth of the Carthaginians: a pointed example might be the use of these two words in the account of the preparations for the banquet that Dido hosts for Aeneas (Verg. *Aen.* 1.639–40), a parallel which may point to a disturbing patterning between the consequences of the arrival of Aeneas for Carthage, and the effects of the arrival of Polynices on Argos and its allies.¹¹ In the *Thebaid*, other examples of this pairing of purple and gold are worth noting: at 4.265, the two words appear in a description of Parthenopaeus (thus evoking the older tradition of the uselessness of gold military equipment that goes back to Nastes in *Iliad* 2.872–5), and they are also found at 6.62 in the account of the pyre of

11 Other examples from the *Aeneid* with *auro* and *ostro* in close juxtaposition in Carthaginian contexts include *Aen.* 4.134, and 11.72 (the robes which Dido had given to Aeneas).

Opheltes in the funeral at Nemea. The detail of the gilded lamps in Adrastus' palace also recalls Dido's hospitality at Carthage (*Aen.* 1.726).¹² A further detail pointing at the wealth of Argos here is the ivory throne on which Adrastus sits (*Theb.* 1.526). Thus, even though the war of the Seven against Thebes takes place in the generation before the *Iliad*, Statius evokes a material culture in Argos which seems to look anachronistically towards the *Realien* of Roman life: even Statius' heroic age has wealth and luxury.¹³

The opposition between the wealth of Argos and the poverty of Thebes is moreover one that is potentially unstable. In spite of Statius' opening observations in book 1 on its poverty, there are details elsewhere in the poem which suggest a more complex picture of Thebes. Early on in book 2, Statius narrates the visit of Laius' ghost to Thebes, where he inflames the rivalry between Eteocles and Polynices. The Theban king is portrayed as resting amid *Assyriis . . . tape- tibus* ("Assyrian fabrics," *Theb.* 2.91). The geographical epithet here is not just a pointer to an opulence that belies the picture of Thebes from the first book, but also an anachronism that points strongly to a contemporary Roman reality of interchange and trade in luxury goods from the east: note that Statius himself, in the *Silvae*, specifically evokes Assyrian goods in insisting on the lavishness of funeral preparations (*Silv.* 2.4.33–6, 2.6.85–8), and likewise, later on in the *Thebaid* itself, Assyrian spices are amongst the lavish spices that are used in the funeral of the child Opheltes at Nemea (*Theb.* 6.209).¹⁴ The reference to Eteocles lying on Assyrian fabrics thus undercuts the earlier association of Thebes with poverty, not only because of the internal parallelism with the "Assyrian" goods mentioned at Nemea, a community rather different from Thebes, but also because of the evocation of contemporary Roman wealth and opulence. This detail from the narrative is then followed up in Tydeus' speech as ambassador to Eteocles later on in book 2, when there is again a hint at the corrupting wealth of Thebes:

satis ostro diues et auro
conspicuus tenuem germani pauperis annum
risisti.

THEB. 2.406–8

12 For the association of lamp-light with the immorality of sympotic activity, cf. Cic. *Cael.* 67: *lux denique longe alia est solis, alia lychnorum* ("then the light of the sun is very much one thing, and the light of lamps is something else").

13 On anachronisms in the *Thebaid*'s battle narratives, see Gibson (2008) 103–7.

14 Cf. Gibson (2010) 44. Coffee (2009b) 247 sees the reference to these Assyrian goods in book 2 as typical of a tyrant's consumption; on "wasteful consumption" in the *Thebaid*, see Coffee (2009b) 194–204.

You have mocked enough, rich in your purple and showy with gold, at the lean year of your brother's poverty.

Though, as we have seen above, Eteocles responds to this speech by emphasizing the poverty of Thebes and its unsuitability as a home for Adrastus' daughter, it is striking that Tydeus represents the wealth of Thebes, whether accurately or not, in the same kind of language that the narrator had used in referring to Adrastus' palace. There is thus not only a hint at overlap between Thebes and supposedly more opulent communities in Greece, but also perhaps a further suggestion that the moral indignation reserved by Tydeus for the opulence of Thebes might also be applied to Argos as well.¹⁵ Thus the *Thebaid's* apparent attempt to draw a straightforward distinction between opulence and poverty is undermined from within: Thebes is supposed to be poor, but there are also contradictory hints at wealth. And the presence of a moralizing discourse within the poem that is critical of luxury can be applied not just to Thebes but also to Argos: Adrastus' city is a place associated with peace (until the arrival of Polynices and Tydeus in book 1), but it is also a place which seems to evoke wealth and opulence. The presence of a hostile discourse in relation to such wealth inevitably colors the way Argos might be seen.

The *Silvae*

In the *Silvae*, as well, we can find traces of a hostile discourse in relation to wealth. Here the position is more complex, since wealth can often be a positive for Statius, especially in relation to that owned by the addressees of the poems of the *Silvae*.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the sense of riches and wealth as something dangerous or as something to be censured is present from time to time within the poems.

15 It is notable that the opportunity to associate Athens with wealth is not taken up by Statius: note, e.g., the simplicity of the altar of Clementia (*Theb.* 12.487–94). The triumph of Theseus that in other respects has been likened to epic triumphs such as that of Augustus in *Aeneid* 8 and of Scipio in *Punica* 17 virtually eschews references to wealth: the spoils of the Amazons inspire wonder (*Theb.* 12.541–2), but the only hint at opulence is the mention of the gems on the girdles of the Amazons (527–8).

16 Newlands (2002) 124–38 and Zeiner (2005) are fundamental treatments of wealth in Statius' *Silvae*; on wealth in Martial and Statius, cf. Dominik (forthcoming).

In *Silvae* 1.3, Statius' subject is the villa of Manilius Vopiscus.¹⁷ Statius emphasizes not just the villa's architecture and setting and the treasures that it contains, but also Manilius' ownership: thus the villa includes various works of art (*Silv.* 1.3.47–57), whose materials include ivory, gems and gold (48–50); as a sequel Statius tells of how the villa's setting surpasses a whole series of mythical exemplars (81–9), thereby affirming that what Manilius has is in fact a laudable kind of splendor which nevertheless cannot be called luxury.¹⁸

scilicet hic illi meditantur pondera mores,
hic premitur fecunda quies uirtusque serena
fronte grauis sanusque nitor luxuque carentes
deliciae, quas ipse suis digressus Athenis
mallet deserto senior Gargettius horto . . .

SILV. 1.3.90–4

Of course here his character reflects on matters of consequence, here is found a peacefulness that is rich, and a serious morality with a serene expression, and healthy splendor, and delights that are lacking in luxury, such as the old man from Gargettus would prefer, setting out from his own city of Athens leaving behind his garden . . .

Newlands has rightly argued that this passage sees wealth being turned into something which is actually a precondition for virtuous conduct.¹⁹ There is something of a Statian sleight of hand here: the villa's delights are said to lack luxury (*luxuque carentes* / *deliciae*),²⁰ in spite of the elaborate description of the villa, its setting, and its contents which Statius had offered earlier on in the poem. The reference to Epicurus, "the old man from Gargettus," is perhaps also worth remarking on, as it evokes debates on the role of hedonism in Epicurus' thought, a frequent angle of attack against Epicureans.²¹ Statius attempts to defuse this charge, by asserting that there is no luxury present. But the end of the poem offers an interesting slant on wealth, as Statius declares that

17 On villas in the poetry of Statius, see Newlands (2002) 119–53; on *Silv.* 1.3, see Rühl (2006) 257–62.

18 See further Zeiner (2005) 132; cf. Rühl (2006) 260.

19 See further Newlands (2002) 136–8.

20 On *luxus* and *luxuria* in Statius, see, e.g., Krüger (1998) 207–11; Newlands (2002) 124–38; Zeiner (2005) 131–4; Rosati (2006), on Statius and Martial.

21 See, e.g., Edwards (1993) 198–200; Warren (2011). On Statius and Epicureanism, see, e.g., Laguna (1996) 257–8; Newlands (2002) 170–3.

Manilius is “worthy of the riches of Midas and Croesus, and of the treasure of the Persians” (*digne Midae Croesique bonis et Perside gaza*, *Silv.* 1.3.105), before going on to observe that Manilius would deserve to have gold-bearing rivers such as the Hermus and the Tagus flow over his lands (106–8).²² Here Statius encapsulates a complex discourse about wealth and morality: on the one hand, saying that Manilius would deserve such extraordinary riches is a way of defusing attention from the impression of wealth that has been engendered earlier on in the poem. At the same time, the rhetoric also conveys the idea that had Manilius enjoyed the wealth of Midas or Croesus, he would have put it to better use than these proverbially rich monarchs. Here, comparison with Martial 6.86 is instructive, a poem which offers a much more straightforward view of similar wealth:

Setinum domitaeque²³ niues densique trientes,
 quando ego uos medico non prohibente bibam?
 stultus et ingratus nec tanto munere dignus
 qui mauult heres diuitis esse Midae.
 possideat Libycas messis Hermumque Tagumque,
 et potet caldam, qui mihi liuet, aquam.

MART. 6.86

Wine of Setia, snows that have melted, and frequent draughts, when will I drink you without a doctor's prohibition? The person who prefers to be the heir of rich Midas is stupid and ungrateful, and not worthy of so great a gift. Let the person who envies me own the harvests of Africa, the Hermus and the Tagus, and drink warm water.

Martial's poem was published before Statius', though one should perhaps not exclude the possibility of one or other poem having circulated and being recited prior to the publication of the books which contain them.²⁴ It might

22 On this passage, see, e.g., Zeiner (2005) 131–2.

23 Here I follow Shackleton Bailey (1993) 1 in accepting Heinsius' conjecture *domitae*, rather than the transmitted reading *dominae*.

24 For the dating of Martial's sixth book, see Grewing (1996) 20–4, who argues for a date around the end of 90 CE. Nauta (2002) 441–4 offers a useful overview of the dating of the books of Martial, and of the books and the individual poems of the *Silvae*, and suggests that book 6 may date from the Saturnalia of 91 CE, on the grounds of references to Martial's illness. Grewing (1996) 23 n. 31 notes that all the books of the *Silvae* are later than the publication of book 6.

be tempting to see this example as an instance of Statius responding to an earlier poem of Martial (the references not just to Midas, but also to the Hermus and the Tagus are enticing), but certainty is of course elusive. Regardless of the relationship between the two poems, what is striking is the opposite uses of the example of Midas that Statius and Martial make.²⁵ Martial's view is that Midas is to be seen as foolish, so that one would not wish to have all his wealth. Statius, by contrast, implicitly makes the point that it is not the wealth of Midas and Croesus which is the problem, but the way such riches are used. Thus even a poem which shows the wealth of Manilius to advantage can still make use of negative stereotypes of wealth: however much Manilius' possessions may seem luxurious, Statius tells the audience that they are not, and he emphatically supports this point at the end of the poem as well, with a compliment to Manilius which deliberately sets him at a lower point on the scale of wealth than Midas and Croesus.

An even more pointed example of this approach occurs in *Silvae* 2.2, another villa poem,²⁶ where there is a similar address to the owner, Pollius Felix:

uiue, Midae gazis et Lydo ditior auro,
Troica et Euphratae supra diademata felix . . .

SILV. 2.2.121–2

Live, richer than the treasures of Midas and Lydian gold, fortunate beyond the diadems of Troy and of the Euphrates . . .

Here, we find the same pairing of Midas and Croesus, the Lydian king, again occurring towards the end of a poem which has lauded a villa, its setting, and its contents, in other words the owner's wealth.²⁷ There is a brilliant ambiguity in the phrasing here, according to whether Pollius' wealth is interpreted as already being beyond the category of Midas' and Croesus' riches (which would accord with the description of Pollius as *felix*, echoing his name, which presumably refers to his current state), or whether Statius is wishing that Pollius will in the future enjoy such riches. Once again we see Statius ready to offer praise in terms that one might expect to be negative (as the example from Martial shows), which are however reshaped by context so as to turn out to be

25 For other references to Midas in Latin, see, e.g., van Dam (1984) 265–6; Newlands (2011b) 150.

26 On *Silv.* 2.2, see, e.g., Krüger (1998); Newlands (2002) 154–98, (2011b) 120–1; Zeiner (2005) 178–90; Rühl (2006) 300–2.

27 For an overview of these lines and their context, see Krüger (1998) 140–3.

positive. The point is backed up in the lines that follow which present Pollius' serene withdrawal and enjoyment of a quiet life, before another example of the strategy of praising wealth by evoking some of the traditional critiques of riches; thus in lines 150–3 Pollius is praised for not hiding away his wealth in a miserly fashion, but for making it available (*expositi census*, 153).²⁸

Silvae 5.1 is another poem which offers interesting insights into Statius' acknowledgement of the existence of a hostile discourse about wealth and riches. The poem deals with the loss of Priscilla, wife of T. Flavius Abascantus, an imperial freedman who held the office of *ab epistulis* under Domitian.²⁹ Criticism of imperial freedmen, especially for the great riches which they might amass, had been a commonplace under preceding reigns such as those of Claudius and Nero, so Statius, unsurprisingly, is concerned to emphasize the extent and diligence of Abascantus' labors on behalf of the emperor: thus, at *Silvae* 5.1.83–5, Statius applies the metaphor of a great weight being placed on Abascantus' shoulders, an image which had earlier been used by Seneca (*Dial.* 11.7.1) to refer to the burdens of the emperor.

The poem does contain evocations of great wealth in places, but they are carefully controlled. When Statius describes Priscilla, he notes her beauty and lineage (which might well imply family wealth) at *Silvae* 5.1.53–4, but does not explicitly mention possessions. Likewise, references to opulence in relation to Abascantus are carefully presented. Statius describes the lavish funeral preparations and offerings of spices which he provides for Priscilla and the tomb that is constructed for her on the Via Appia (*Silv.* 5.1.208–16, 222–46), but the splendor of the preparations may be seen as a sign of devotion to a spouse rather than as a sign of extravagance: thus Statius imagines an onlooker at the tomb seeing it as the piety of a husband (*uisa pietate mariti*, 238). The same might also be said for Abascantus' desire to commemorate his wife in a material form, a desire which is however offset against Statius' offer of a more long-lasting memorial in poetic form (1–15).

Statius, however, also draws on more hostile views of wealth, but subordinates them to the poem's overall thematic direction. Thus at *Silvae* 5.1.55–6 he praises Priscilla for her devotion to Abascantus (even going so far as to use the trope of *uniuira*, married only to one husband, in spite of an earlier reference in 45–6 to her being married before). He then affirms the strength of her loyalty to Abascantus by saying that she would have been unmoved by mythological seducers such as Paris, Penelope's suitors from the *Odyssey*, and Thyestes:

28 Compare the similar praise of Atedius Melior at *Silv.* 2.3.70–1.

29 On *Silv.* 5.1, see, e.g., A. Hardie (1983) 185–7; Weaver (1994); Gibson (2006) 71–5; Rühl (2006) 163–74.

illum nec Phrygius uitiasset raptor amorem
 Dulichiue proci nec qui fraternus adulter
 casta Mycenaeano conubia polluit auro.

SILV. 5.1.57–9³⁰

Neither the Trojan seducer, nor the suitors of Ithaca could have sullied such a love, nor the fraternal adulterer who fouled a chaste marriage in return for Mycenaean gold.

After the initial reference to Paris as the seducer of Helen of Troy, the second and third examples suggest the corrupting power of riches, with the suitors who besieged Odysseus' wife Penelope with their offerings, and Thyestes who was able to seduce Aerope, the wife of his brother Atreus.³¹ The effect of these examples is clearly to suggest that Priscilla surpasses famous mythological forebears, but we can also note, along with the much more negative examples of Helen and Aerope, the ingenious inclusion of Penelope, who did indeed accept gifts from her suitors, whilst remaining faithful to Odysseus. (Compare Statius' praise of his own wife in similar tones at *Silvae* 3.5.6–10, where she would reject a thousand suitors, and without having recourse to the stratagems of Penelope.) The example of Penelope, with its possible hints at Penelope's acquisition of possessions, is thus a counter-example to Priscilla who is thus assumed to be immune to such riches. If one excludes a cynical interpretation of Priscilla's chastity as being founded on riches so great that no gifts could ever be enough to corrupt her, there is thus an implication here that Priscilla would steadfastly endure poverty, such is her devotion to her husband. This is indeed borne out in the following lines, where Statius argues that the fabulous riches of eastern peoples such as the Babylonians and Indians (amongst others) would have no effect on Priscilla, for she would prefer instead to live in poverty:

mallet cum paupertate pudica
 intemerata mori uitamque rependere famae.

SILV. 5.1.62–3

30 Citations of *Silvae* 5 are from Gibson (2006); citations of other books are from Courtney (1992).

31 The reference to gold in the case of Thyestes and Aerope is complex (see Gibson [2006] 101 *ad Silv.* 5.1.57–9), but the reference to gold is in any case negative, as is indicated by the verb *polluit*.

Priscilla would prefer to die undefiled in virtuous poverty, setting her life in the scales against her reputation.

The conditional nature of this sentence (if she were offered lavish wealth, she would prefer to die in poverty) is an ingenious way of drawing attention away from Priscilla's actual situation, that she is in fact living chastely but also (it is reasonable to suppose) in great wealth.³² Statius uses a similar technique later on in the poem in a passage where he celebrates the modest virtues of Priscilla (*Silv.* 5.1.117–26), pointing out that the success of her husband has not in any way led to any change in her qualities (117–19). Statius then uses a simile, comparing Priscilla's providing simple and modest nourishment for her husband to the way in which a rustic Apulian or Sabine woman would support her husband on his return from a hard day's work in the fields (121–6). The technique is so subtle that it is easy to forget that the simile essentially compares a presumably wealthy woman to a poor one. The passage also contains another instance of Abascantus being presented in the way the emperor too might be presented, for Priscilla reminds her husband of the example of Abascantus' master (*exemplumque ad erile monet*, 122), a pointer to Domitian's concerns to emphasize frugality at the table, even if Suetonius, who refers to the simplicity of Domitian's dinners, also refers to his greed at midday (*Dom.* 21).³³ Restraint in feasting and the avoidance of luxurious dining is also a theme Statius uses in another poem addressed to a freedman, *Silvae* 3.3, addressed to Claudius Etruscus in memory of his father, another imperial freedman who had served as a *rationibus*. Statius here too praises the frugality of his dining (*Silv.* 3.3.107–8), and the context is important, as Etruscus' father had, as the poem makes clear (86–105), been in charge of imperial finances. Even though this preceding passage includes a lavish summary from Statius of the wealth from across the empire which came through the hands of Domitian's *a rationibus*, it is essential for Statius to set this in counterpoint with the personal simplicity of Etruscus' father, to avoid the lurking possibility of any kind of critique of an imperial freedman who had doubtless succeeded in gaining extraordinary riches.³⁴

32 For counterfactual similes in the *Thebaid*, see Gibson (2008) 100–2.

33 See further Jones (1996) 148, who compare Pliny's similarly harsh account of Domitian's table at *Pan.* 49.6.

34 See further, e.g., Weaver (1965); Lotito (1974–5); Laguna (1992) 280–6; Newlands (2002) 220–2.

Statius and Wealth

The question of how one might view the acquisition of material goods (potentially a much more contested issue than their mere possession) can be broadened out to the poet himself. As Coleman and Zeiner have shown, when Statius refers to his enjoyment of his Alban country estate with the words, *parui beatus ruris honoribus* ("blessed in the honors of a small rural property," *Silv.* 4.5.1), there is a potential ambiguity in the meaning of *beatus*, which might denote simply being "blessed," but which could also suggest the common idiom of *beatus* signifying "rich": the ambiguity is all the more pointed given the juxtaposition of *beatus* with *parui*, which evokes familiar Horatian tropes of modesty and simplicity.³⁵ When Statius refers to his ownership with the word *honoribus*, this can be taken not only as a reference to the pleasures of being a landowner,³⁶ but may also refer to the imperial patronage of Statius' father.³⁷ But a quite different view of Statius' finances is given by Juvenal's seventh satire, which famously refers to the vicissitudes of Statius' poetic career:³⁸

curritur ad uocem iucundam et carmen amicae
Thebaidos, laetam cum fecit Statius urbem
promisitque diem: tanta dulcedine captos
adficit ille animos tantaque libidine uolgi
auditur. sed cum fregit subsellia uersu
esurit, intactam Paridi nisi uendit Agauen.

JUV. 7.82–7

People run to his pleasant voice and the song of his girlfriend, the *Thebaid*, when Statius has made the city happy and promised a day for recitation: such is the sweetness with which he affects their minds when he has caught them and such is the yearning with which he is heard. But when he breaks the benches with his verse he goes hungry, unless he sells his undefiled *Agave* to Paris.

In this passage we see a much harsher view of Statius, the view that he is a mercenary poet solely seeking to cash in on the caprices of his audience. This

35 Coleman (1988) 159–60; Zeiner (2005) 131, 252–3.

36 Coleman (1988) 160.

37 On the Alban estate, which Domitian furnished with a water supply for Statius (*Silv.* 3.1.61–4), see A. Hardie (1983) 12–13, Nauta (2002) 202–3.

38 On this passage, see, e.g., Markus (2000) 171–5; Zeiner (2005) 55, 66–7.

passage may in part have helped to contribute to the increasing weight of critical opprobrium which has sometimes been heaped on Statius. The suggestion from Juvenal, a much more canonical poet, that Statius might be a poet of no real integrity, only interested in making a quick and lucrative impression on his audience, is likely to have influenced Dante and to have eventually contributed to the negative views of Statius which grew up from at least the eighteenth century onwards.³⁹

Silvae 5.3, the poem in which Statius gives an account of his father's career, offers a couple of passages which seem to point more directly at financial questions. Not only was his father a poet but he was also a teacher, first in Naples and then, later on, in Rome. I quote two passages which might be of interest. The first deals with Statius' father's family:

non tibi deformes obscuri sanguinis ortus
nec sine luce genus, quamquam fortuna parentum
artior expensis.

SILV. 5.3.116–18

You did not have the shameful origins of an obscure pedigree, nor was your family without luster, although the fortune of your parents became narrower through expenditure.

This is from a passage which deals with the origins of the elder Statius in Velia, and also his Neapolitan connections.⁴⁰ Now if Avantius' conjecture *expensis* for manuscript M's meaningless *extensis* in line 118 is correct, this passage would seem to indicate that Statius' father's family fell on hard times, while a reference to the gold *bullā* in the following sentence (118–20) might suggest the family had originally enjoyed equestrian status which then might have been lost owing to failure to meet the property qualification.⁴¹

It is against the background of these difficulties that we might interpret the professional poetic career of Statius' father in the Greek and Italian contests which Statius describes elsewhere in *Silvae* 5.3. Naturally there is no mention of

39 On the decline of Statius' reputation from the eighteenth century onwards, see Vessey (1996).

40 On Statius' father and his career, see A. Hardie (1983) 5–14; McNelis (2002); Gibson (2006) on *Silv.* 5.3; Rühl (2006) 362–7.

41 A. Hardie (1983) 5–6. Nauta (2002) 198–9 does not see this passage as a reference to loss of equestrian status, but see Plin. *HN* 33.10 for the gold *bullā* being worn by children of equestrian rank.

prize money in *Silvae* 5.3, either for Statius' father or indeed for Statius himself, even though the isolympic *Augustalia* in Naples which was won by father and son did have cash prizes.⁴² There is similarly no mention of fees being earned by Statius' father for his teaching activity: the language of *Silvae* 5.3.146–7 and 176–7 merely reports in the most vague and praiseworthy terms that parents both in Italy and in Rome entrusted their sons to be taught by Statius. There is however one other interesting moment later on in *Silvae* 5.3, when Statius is listing the qualities of his father:

quid referam expositos seruato pondere mores?
 quae pietas, quam uile lucrum, quae cura pudoris,
 quantus amor recti! rursusque, ubi dulce remitti,
 gratia quae dictis, animo quam nulla senectus!

SILV. 5.3.246–9

What am I to say of an open way of life that maintained its dignity? What piety you had, how you despised gain, how you cared for modesty, how great was your love for what is good! And again, when it was sweet to be at ease, what charm there was in your words, and how there was no old age in your mind!

Quam uile lucrum, when set alongside the passage of Juvenal quoted above, is not just formulaic praise of a man for not being over-concerned with vulgar gain, but also a preventive measure to forestall accusations of cupidity which might come to rest all too easily at the door of a professional litterateur. We can also note a passage such as *Silvae* 5.3.47–8, where Statius' wish to have been able to provide a "work equal to temples" for his dead father can be seen in terms both of the poetic convention of troping poetry as a monument, but also in terms of the epigraphic convention of a bereaved individual's regret at not being able to provide a more lavish physical monument:⁴³ as Nauta has argued, this may be seen as a reminder of the poet's modest financial circumstances.⁴⁴

The fact that Statius has both to deal with rich friends in the *Silvae*, and operate within larger literary and moral traditions of hostility towards wealth may be one way in which to view the hostile discourse concerning wealth

42 On the prizes awarded at both sacred and thematic contests, see A. Hardie (1983) 25–6, who notes that the more prestigious sacred contests which did not carry cash prizes nevertheless could bring indirect financial benefits; cf. Newby (2005) 247.

43 Gibson (2006) 284.

44 Nauta (2002) 202–3.

which not only finds its way into Statius' *Thebaid*, but into the *Silvae* as well at certain points, in spite of the general tendency for Statius to praise his friends and their wealth and possessions. There are, if not contradictions in the presentation of wealth, then contraindications of how riches might be seen. To that extent, the paradoxical location of Statius the spendthrift amongst those guilty of avarice in Dante's *Purgatorio* is an ironic but useful reminder of the complexities of Statius' approach to wealth across his poetry (even though Dante did not have access to the *Silvae*), all the more so as Dante's Statius finally undergoes repentance:

Allor m'accorsi che troppo aprir l'ali
potean le mani a spendere, e pente'mi
così di quel come de li altri mali.

PURG. 22.43–5

Then I perceived that one's hands can open
their wings too much in spending, and I repented
of that as of my other vices.⁴⁵

45 I am indebted to Kathleen Coleman for helpful comments on a much earlier version of this paper.

Family and Kinship in the Works of Statius

Neil W. Bernstein

Several standard topics of praise appear in Statius' encomium of Rutilius Gallicus (*Silv.* 1.4). These include Gallicus' eloquence and justice as *praefectus urbi* (7–37), the people's love for him (38–57), the favor of the gods that effected his recovery from illness (58–114), and his *cursus honorum* (72–93).¹ Praise of the honorand's ancestry, if possible, is an expected ingredient of an encomium (e.g., *Men. Rhet.* 370.9–28). Statius makes an unexpected play on these generic expectations when he praises Gallicus for granting nobility to a previously undistinguished family:

genus ipse suis permissaque retro
nobilitas; nec origo latet, sed luce sequente
uincitur et magno gaudet cessisse nepoti.

SILV. 1.4.68–70

He gives pedigree to his family and nobility is allowed to flow in reverse; nor is his origin humble, but it is conquered by succeeding glory and rejoices to yield to a great descendant.

Gallicus' career exemplifies the newly expanded social mobility of the first century CE. In the same generation, Vespasian the tax collector's son became emperor, and the freedman father of Claudius Etruscus became an important imperial official.² Noble descent could still be viewed as a distinction by Statius' contemporaries, but it no longer held the same dynastic significance that it had in the late republic.³

This chapter examines the aesthetic and ideological purposes of the discourse of kinship in the poetry of Statius. I discuss Statius' representations of relationships between children, their parents, and more distant ancestors; relationships between spouses and between siblings; and relationships of

1 A. Hardie (1983) 187–9, 195–8; Henderson (1998a); Nauta (2002) 206–11.

2 Nauta (2002) 229–33.

3 Zeiner (2005) 135–225 discusses how Statius' patrons create distinction for themselves. For the concept of “distinction,” see Bourdieu (1984) and Rühl, pp. 91–105 in this volume.

created kinship, between surrogate parents and their foster children. Statius also employs kinship as a metaphor in order to represent relationships where no familial connection is present: those formed between friends, or between the emperor and his subjects. The conclusion argues that the ideological value set on kin relationships varies both across the multiple genres in which Statius composes and within the individual texts themselves.

Dynasties and Lineages

The narratives of failed dynastic succession in both of Statius' epics reflect the violence of the Roman succession crisis in 69 CE, and the subsequent anxieties in the late 80s caused in part by Domitian's failure to produce an heir. The civil war of the *Thebaid* and Achilles' unfulfilled desire to succeed Jupiter in the *Achilleid* can be read on a basic level as meditations on the dangers of a vacant throne. Statius' response to the dynastic issues of his era brings to the fore the theme of intrafamilial conflict that remains secondary in Vergil's *Aeneid*, where the bulk of the narrative focuses on the mutually supportive Aeneadae rather than the feuding family of Latinus. Such a re-prioritization of a theme treated by the *Aeneid* is a technique commonly employed by the Flavian epic poets.⁴

The proem to the *Thebaid* presents the war between Eteocles and Polynices as the latest episode in a history of dynastic violence stretching back to Cadmus' foundation of the city. As the Fury Tisiphone attacks Eteocles and Polynices, *gentilisque animos subiit furor* ("the madness of their lineage enter[s] their spirits," *Theb.* 1.126).⁵ Her hostile intervention makes it impossible for these latest descendants of Oedipus' *confusa domus* ("disturbed household," 1.17) to break their lineage's historical pattern of intrafamilial conflict. The *fraternas acies* ("brothers' battle lines") of the poem's opening words replicate on a larger scale the battle between the earthborn warriors generated by Cadmus when he sowed the dragon's teeth (1.7–8, 4.434–42). This destructive repetition of violent origins is the basic paradigm of Theban history. Characters as different as the old commoner Aletes and the young princess Ismene interpret their present misfortunes as repetitions of past sufferings (3.174–217, 8.607–20).⁶ The repeated misfortunes of Cadmus' lineage contrast with the more optimistic narrative of the Aeneadae, who leave behind the sufferings of their Trojan past and found a new dynasty in Italy.

4 Hardie (1993).

5 Bernstein (2008) 64–85. For madness in the *Thebaid*, see Hershkowitz (1998) 247–301.

6 Davis (1994).

Prior Roman narratives of civil war inform Statius' depiction of the war at Thebes. Vergil's Juno celebrates Allecto's ability *unanimos armare in proelia fratres* ("to set likeminded brothers at war," *Aen.* 7.335) before sending her off to foment the war in Latium. Ovid's account of the battle of the *terrigenae* at the founding of Thebes is the best-known version in prior Roman epic, one that undoes the optimistic Vergilian narrative of foundation (*Met.* 3.115–30).⁷ Lucan compares the mass suicide of Vulteius' soldiers to this originary Theban civil war and represents the later war between Eteocles and Polynices as prefigured by this *omen* (*Luc.* 4.549–51). His account of the Sullan proscriptions most closely approximates the parricide and fratricide in Oedipus' family (2.149–51). A father-in-law leads the *bella . . . plus quam ciuilia* ("wars more than civil," 1.1) of the *De Bello Civili* against his son-in-law: the *Thebaid*, however, makes a fatal conflict between brothers both the cause and the climax of its civil war. Statius literalizes what remains metaphorical in Lucan, where men who are only figurative "brothers" fight the Roman civil war as citizens of the same republic.⁸ The aggression that transpires between members of Cadmus' dynasty can be as simple and as horrifying as the brothers' duel; it can also be more pervasive and subtle. Tiresias appears to speak, for example, as the impersonal mouthpiece of the gods when he delivers the oracle demanding the death of Menoeceus (*Theb.* 10.609–15). Yet it is equally possible to read his oracle as a means for the grandson of one of the *terrigenae* to demand the death of another.⁹

More positive representations of relationships within dynastic lines can be found in the *Silvae* and the *Achilleid*. Many of the *Silvae* employ the encomiastic *topos* that young men either replicate the fame of their ancestors or (more often) surpass it. Ancestors can provide positive examples to be emulated by their distant descendants. Vitorius Marcellus' son Geta is exhorted to learn from his great-grandfather C. Hosidius Geta,¹⁰ a commander who received triumphal *ornamenta* under Claudius: *dignos quem iam nunc belliger actus / poscit auus praestatque domi nouisse triumphos* ("now the warlike ancestor already demands worthy actions from [Geta] and makes it possible to learn of his triumphs at home," *Silv.* 4.4.72–3). Members of Domitian's divinized family descend from heaven to visit his colossal equestrian statue (1.1.97–8).¹¹ Like all of the Flavian poets, Statius urges the emperor to produce a successor; even in the context of an encomium, the threat of disorder posed by an empty throne

7 Hardie (1990).

8 See further below, pp. 152–3.

9 See Gantz (1993) 468–71 (Menoeceus), 530 (Tiresias).

10 Coleman (1988) 151.

11 Newlands (2002) 46–73.

cannot be entirely banished (e.g., Mart. 6.3.1–2, Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.74, Sil. 3.625). Achilles can trace his descent back to Jupiter through his paternal grandfather Aeacus, though he longs to be Jupiter's son and successor. His effort to identify himself through his ancestors in the *Achilleid* occasions dark humor, as when he identifies himself to his rape victim Deidamia with the words *ille ego—quid trepidas?—genitum quem caerulea mater / paene Ioui* ("I am the man—what are you afraid of?—whom my seablue mother *almost* bore to Jupiter," *Achil.* 1.650–1). The *Achilleid* makes Achilles' yearning for more exalted ancestry one of the many contrasts between its blundering, transvestite bravo and the raging warrior of Homer's *Iliad*.

Parents and Children

Ancient authors often view themselves as the parents of their literary works and their predecessors as the symbolic "fathers" of their chosen literary genre. Thus Ovid's *Tristia* intercedes for its exiled "father" (*Tr.* 3.1.73–4), and Horace contrasts his biological father with Lucilius, the "father" of the genre of Roman satire (*Sat.* 1.4, 1.6).¹² Statius characterizes both his literary filiation and pater-nity with greater anxiety than the Augustan poets. In contrast to Horace's father, who was his son's best ethical teacher (*Sat.* 1.4.103–31), the elder Papinius was his son's best poetic *magister*. Though he is already the author of the *Thebaid*, his father's death threatens Statius' ability to continue practicing his craft successfully:

te nostra magistro
Thebais urgebat priscorum exordia uatum;
tu cantus stimulare meos, tu pandere facta
heroum bellicae modos positusque locorum
monstrabas. labat incerto mihi limite cursus
te sine, et orbatæ caligant uela carinae.

SILV. 5.3.233–8

With you as my teacher, my *Thebaid* pressed hard on the works of prior poets. You showed me how to invigorate my songs, how to set out the deeds of heroes and the ways of war and the locations of places. Without you, my course falters, its track is uncertain, and the sails of my bereaved ship are shrouded in gloom.

¹² Schlegel (2000).

Statius offers a similarly anxiety-laden image of his own role as the father of the *Thebaid*. Where Ovid proudly boasted that his epic would outlive him (*Met.* 15.871–9), Statius asks his completed *Thebaid*: *durabisne procul dominoque legere superstes?* (“will you endure longer and will you outlive your master to be read?”, *Theb.* 12.810).¹³ Statius’ postures as bereaved son and apprehensive father, calculated contrasts to the traditional discourse of literary kinship, call attention to the challenge that the poet faces in taking up his belated position in the epic canon.¹⁴

These metapoetic narratives that make Statius an ideal figure of *pietas*, however, sharply contrast with the grim representation of relationships between parents and children in his epics. The *Thebaid* relates how Oedipus the parricide and perpetrator of incest arranges the death of his own sons and the ruin of his city through a prayer gladly answered by the Fury Tisiphone. Other families, such as those of Amphiarus (*Theb.* 7.785–8) and Theseus (12.626), come to equally grim ends.¹⁵ Fathers are generally absent or incompetent in Statian epic. Oedipus’ sons confine him out of shame at his crimes (1.46–52), the identity of Parthenopaeus’ father remains unknowable,¹⁶ and Lapithaon is such a young father that Antigone mistakes him for the brother of his son Alatreus (7.290–308). Achilles in the *Achilleid* is raised by Chiron rather than in his father Peleus’ halls, as in Homer (*Il.* 9.485–95). Fathers such as Polynices and Achilles abandon their infant sons to make war on their enemies, unaware of the obligation that they thereby impose on them (*Theb.* 3.682–4, *Achil.* 1.908).

Statius’ epic fathers are equally unwilling or unable to protect their grown daughters. Crotopus unsympathetically condemns his daughter Psamathe to death after he learns of her rape by Apollo (*Theb.* 1.594–5), while Lycomedes is unable to protect his daughter from rape by Achilles in the *Achilleid* (1.640–61). Adrastus is unable to foresee the terrible consequences of betrothing his daughters to the visiting strangers Polynices and Tydeus. The Argive king acts in what he perceives to be good faith, unaware that he has been misled by another of the epic’s deceptive oracles because Apollo has concealed its consequences from his prophet Amphiarus (*Theb.* 1.398–9). Adrastus’ decision, however, to grant his daughter’s request to make war (3.711–21), in defiance of a warning of inevitable failure from Amphiarus (3.635–45), represents a culpable misuse of his paternal and regal authority where ignorance cannot be advanced as an excuse. Jupiter’s decision to yield control of the Theban battlefield to the female Furies (11.122–33) extends to the divine level this pattern

13 See further Gervais, pp. 221–39 in this volume.

14 Bernstein (2008) 193–204. On Statius’ father, see McNelis (2002).

15 Sacerdoti (2008).

16 Parkes (2009c).

of failure to exercise paternal and regal authority appropriately.¹⁷ The *Thebaid* identifies a general abnegation of paternal authority in the epic as one cause of the nightmarish disruptions of society at Thebes, Argos, and Lemnos.

Nor does motherhood provide the positive counterpart to fatherhood in the *Thebaid*. Mothers are relegated to the role of unassimilable others, “asymbolic” in the Kristevan terms of Augoustakis’ recent reading.¹⁸ Jocasta’s incestuous coupling with Oedipus makes her *impia belli / mater* (“the impious mother of the war,” *Theb.* 7.483–4; cf. 11.407–8), responsible for her sons’ feuding. Mothers such as Agave (4.565–9), Niobe (4.575–8), Ino (9.401–3), and the Lemnian women¹⁹ cause the death of their children either as the result of the gods’ hostility or through futile attempts to resist it. Epic fathers generally want their sons to become warriors while mothers wish to retain them safely at home. Both of Statius’ epics present a series of ironic contrasts to this traditional narrative of parental involvement in the lives of their sons. In the *Achilleid*, the spear handed down by Peleus to his son Achilles becomes the symbol of this father’s desire for him to become a warrior. Thetis ruefully observes *et patria iam se metitur in hasta* (“already he is measuring himself against his father’s spear,” *Achil.* 1.41) as she attempts to implement the unexpected strategy of preventing her son from participating in war by concealing him in feminine disguise. Oedipus’ equally atypical means of inspiring his sons to become epic warriors is to curse them to kill one other (*Theb.* 1.46–87). Mothers’ attempts to keep their sons from participating in war typically receive little support from the epic narrator. Epic narrators implicitly side with the father’s desire to see his son become a warrior, if for no other reason than that there would be no martial epics to narrate if sons did not proceed to the battlefield.²⁰ In the *Thebaid*, however, the epic narrator praises each of Jocasta’s attempts to prevent her sons from fighting (7.470–533, 11.315–53), as the war in question represents the worst example of human immorality. The Fury, however, returns the epic narrative to its predicted track by disrupting each of Jocasta’s supplications of her children (7.564–607, 11.382–9).

Through the inclusion of multiple laments by mothers over their dead children, Statius creates a new aesthetic for martial epic.²¹ The *Thebaid* condemns a number of mothers to lament that they ever gave birth when war bereaves

17 Bernstein (2004).

18 Augoustakis (2010b); see also Newlands (2006).

19 See below, pp. 145–8.

20 Bernstein (2008) 88–94.

21 Pollmann (2004) 47.

them of their children.²² As she laments the murder of her sons by Tydeus, Ide regrets giving birth to them: *quanto melius . . . quis steriles thalami* ("how much better it is for those whose marriage chambers are sterile," *Theb.* 3.157–8). The *Thebaid* appears to convict the *Aeneid* of providing insufficient opportunity to grieve for the losses of war. The single Vergilian exemplar of a bereaved mother's lament, delivered by the anonymous mother of Euryalus before she is hauled away by Ascanius' henchmen (*Aen.* 9.481–97), cannot account entirely for the suffering caused by war. Feminine lament now occupies a much more significant proportion of the epic narrative. Laments by aggrieved mothers provide the frame for masculine action (rather than, as in other epics, the interlude), and may be coupled with other strategies of resistance such as Bacchic frenzy.²³ The *Achilleid* signals its central theme of maternal fear of impending bereavement in its opening lines, where Thetis observes Paris' ship sailing for Troy with Helen on board, *plenaque materni referens praesagia somni* ("bringing home the fulfilled prophecy of his mother's [Hecuba's] nightmare," *Achil.* 1.22). The narrator marks the significance of the event for both Thetis and Hecuba by expostulating *heu numquam uana parentum / auguria!* ("alas, parents' auguries are never worthless!", 1.25–6). If actual bereavement is a regular occurrence in the latter half of the *Thebaid*, the regular expression of maternal anxieties regarding bereavement provides the *Achilleid* with a tragic counterpoint to its comedy of transvestism.²⁴

Husbands and Wives

Many of the *Silvae* celebrate both men and women as ethical partners in idealized marriages. The marital unanimity of Polla and Pollius Felix represents the ethical complement to the serene environment that he has created at his Surrentine villa:²⁵

non ulla deo meliore cohaerent
pectora, non alias docuit Concordia mentes . . .
discite securi, quorum de pectore mixtae

22 Examples include the laments of Ide (*Theb.* 3.151–68); Hypsipyle (5.608–35); Eurydice, mother of Opheltes (6.138–76); Ismenis (9.376–98); Eurydice, mother of Menoeceus (10.793–814); Jocasta (11.634–47); and the Argive mothers (12.789–809).

23 Markus (2004); Augoustakis (2010b) 75–91.

24 Mendelsohn (1990); Delarue (2000) 193; Heslin (2005) 105–14.

25 Nisbet (1978); Newlands (2002) 186–91; Zeiner (2005) 178–90.

in longum coiere faces sanctusque pudicae
 servat amicitiae leges amor. ite per annos
 saeculaque et priscae titulos praecedite famae.

SILV. 2.2.154–5, 143–6

No hearts unite more blessed of heaven, no other minds has Concord better taught . . . Learn untroubled . . . Mingled flames from your breasts coalesced for long time to come and hallowed love keeps chaste friendship's laws. Go through the years and centuries, outdoing the glories of ancient fame.²⁶

While the praise of marital chastity and harmony may be conventional, the foundation of this marriage in Epicurean friendship is unexpected.²⁷ The *epithalamium* for Arruntius Stella and Violentilla (*Silv.* 1.2) refashions the conventions of elegiac poetry in an equally atypical direction: here, marriage is the culmination of a love affair rather than its antithesis, and the remarrying bride will pass down both wealth and ancestral reputation to her children.²⁸ This emphasis on the contributions of the maternal line to a descendant's status (also visible in *Silv.* 4.4) reflects a wider shift in attitudes toward descent. The new upper class of the first century CE no longer made descent through males the sole marker of noble ancestry, and could highlight wealth, connoisseurship, and philosophical accomplishment as other important indices of distinction.²⁹

Statius' encomium of his wife Claudia (*Silv.* 3.5) praises her "maternal" care for his work: *longi tu sola laboris / conscia, cumque tuis creuit mea Thebais annis* ("you alone were conscious of my long labor, and my *Thebaid* grew along with your own years," 3.5.35–6).³⁰ This acknowledgement of a wife's contribution to the completion of a literary work is exceptional in Roman poetry; one need hardly add, in most of Western literature. The representation of marriage in the *Achilleid* draws on the conventions established by Ovid in his elegiac works and then applied to epic in the *Metamorphoses*.³¹ Failed marriage is a source of humor rather than tragedy, as when Neptune urges Thetis *Pelea iam desiste queri thalamosque minores* ("quit complaining already about Peleus and your

26 Text and translation adapted from Shackleton Bailey (2003).

27 Van Dam (1984) 79–80.

28 A. Hardie (1983) 111–15; Newlands (2002) 88–105; Hersch (2007).

29 Saller (1994) 74–101; Zeiner (2005) 171–8, 201–9; in Martial and Statius, Dominik (forthcoming).

30 Burck (1987); Lesueur (2003); Henderson (2007); Newlands (2009c) 398–9.

31 Heslin (2005) 237–76; Bernstein (2008) 125–31.

lesser marriage," *Achil.* 1.90). The relationship between Achilles and Deidamia exemplifies the Ovidian fusion of epic and elegy: *amor* takes precedence over *arma* for the young hero until his departure for Troy, while his tearful spouse plays the role of *relict*a at the conclusion of the brief marriage.

In Statius' *Thebaid*, however, marriage brings many of the same horrors as blood relationships and ancestral lineages. The narrative includes some examples of mythology's worst marriages, including Oedipus' incestuous marriage to Jocasta and the Lemnian women who murder their spouses and children. Following Venus' exhortation *age auersis thalamos purgate maritis* ("come, clear out your marriage chambers if your husbands are averse," *Theb.* 5.137), Polyxo urges the Lemnian women to commit murder through the precedents of another group of spousal murderers, the Danaides (5.117–22). The war at Thebes exacerbates the constant state of marital discord between Jupiter and Juno. While Juno has no objection to the destruction of Thebes, site of numerous Jovian infidelities, she perceives his involvement of Argos in the war as an attack on her interests designed to provoke her: *quin age, si tanta est thalami discordia sancti* ("come on then, if discord in our sacred marriage chamber is worth so much to you," 1.260). Statius employs the term *discordia*, normally used to designate civil war in Roman epic and exclusively so elsewhere in the *Thebaid*,³² in order to emphasize the interpenetration of the current war at Thebes with longstanding conflicts between the gods. The couple exchange their familiar roles from the *Iliad*, where Hera is the one resolved to destroy Troy and Zeus indicates his sympathy for the Trojans (*Il.* 4.30–49).

After Jupiter departs from the narrative in *Thebaid* 11,³³ Juno plays the dominant divine role in *Thebaid* 12 by guiding the Argive matrons, first to Athens to supplicate Theseus, and then to Thebes to bury their husbands. While protection of marriage is one of Juno's typical functions in Greco-Roman cult, her efforts at the end of the epic create a deliberately ironic incongruity with her reprise of her role (familiar from Vergil and Ovid) as the avenger of Jupiter's infidelities. The Argive matrons tactfully attempt to avoid reference to the parlous state of Juno's marriage when they represent her on a votive robe as *expers conubii et timide positura sororem* ("without experience of marriage and fearfully making ready to put aside her role as a sister," *Theb.* 10.62); but in doing so, they only emphasize the incestuous nature of this union. As protectress of marriage, Juno asks the Moon to shine more brightly on the Theban battlefield so that her devotee Argia may find her husband's corpse (12.291–311). Her

32 *Theb.* 1.130, 137 (conflict between brothers); 2.288; 5.74; 7.50 (personification of civil war); cf. Verg. *Aen.* 6.280, 7.545, 8.702, 12.583; Ov. *Met.* 9.403; Luc. 5.299.

33 See above, pp. 142–5.

jealous obsessions, however, generate a moment of wry humor when she opens her request with a claim to have forgiven the Moon for prolonging the night that Jupiter spent with Alcmena (12.300–1).

The amicable marriage of Argia and Polynices initially appears to offer a welcome contrast to these broken, conflict-ridden, or murderous marriages. When Polynices reveals his intention to make war on Thebes, Argia self-consciously distances herself from the stereotype of the complaining elegiac *relicta* and offers to support her husband (*Theb.* 2.334–52).³⁴ Yet her very devotion results in unintended consequences as she supplicates her father Adrastus (3.678–710) in order to begin the war that results in her husband's destruction. By wearing Harmonia's necklace, a gift from her husband, on her wedding day (2.299–305), Argia also inspires Eriphyle to destroy her husband Amphiaraus (4.187–213). Her admission after the Argive defeat *tantae quae sola ruinae / causa fui* ("I was the only cause of such great ruin," 12.198–9) stands in opposition to Jocasta's claim of sole responsibility as "mother" of the war.³⁵ An epic that prominently features incest and spousal murder has little room for the healthy expression of sexuality in marriage. Argia only experiences *castissimus ardor* ("most chaste passion," 12.194) for Polynices after his death, and her devotion to her dead husband is such that she represents him as more important than her father or her child (12.113–15, 12.270–7).³⁶ She thereby reprises an important encomiastic theme of the *Silvae*, which make loyalty to a spouse after death a marker of the affection and fidelity that existed within the marriage. Statius offers similar praise of Polla Argentaria for her loving observance of her husband Lucan's memory twenty years after his death (*Silv.* 2.7),³⁷ while the imperial freedman T. Flavius Abascantus receives commendation for his exemplary performance of grief for his deceased wife Priscilla (5.1).³⁸

Brothers and Sisters

The feud between Polynices and Eteocles drives the main narrative of the *Thebaid*, and normative performances of brotherhood are rare elsewhere in the epic. Statius repeatedly marks this feud as the epic's moral nadir and the brothers' *furor* as a force that appears to make them indistinguishable. Yet

34 Bessone (2002).

35 See above, pp. 142–5.

36 Hershkowitz (1994).

37 Malamud (1995).

38 Lotito (1974–1975); A. Hardie (1983) 185–7; Zeiner (2005) 209–25.

their performances in various human relationships in fact permit ethical distinctions to be drawn between the brothers.³⁹ Eteocles exemplifies the isolation of the tyrant, alienated from his parents and siblings and lacking spouse, children, or friends.⁴⁰ Polynices, by contrast, longs for his wife and grieves for his friend Tydeus as *alius misero ac melior mihi frater ademptus* ("another and better brother snatched from my miserable self," *Theb.* 9.53; cf. 1.402–3, 2.113; Catull. 101.6).⁴¹

Hostility between divine siblings both reflects and inspires the violence that transpires between the human brothers. Angry Dis describes the gruesome and excessive acts of violence of the latter half of the *Thebaid* as vengeance against his superior brother Jupiter (*Theb.* 8.34–79). Tisiphone manipulates both brothers throughout the epic in response to Oedipus' prayers, refusing to let Polynices die in the chariot race (6.491–517) and hurling Eteocles out to the battlefield to fight his brother (11.387–9). After dictating the terms of an apparent collaboration in creating the *grande opus* ("great work," 11.100) of the fratricidal duel, Tisiphone sends off her sister Megaera with the abusive epithet *inimica* ("my enemy," 11.112). The frequent recurrence of paranarratives of fraternal conflict, such as those between Aegyptus and Danaus (6.290–3) and Atreus and Thyestes (4.305–8), suggests the inevitable interrelation of desire for power, bloody fraternal conflicts, and assaults by divinities who are themselves hostile to their siblings.

Non-violent competitions between siblings make clear that only limited alternatives to the main narrative's paradigm of fraternal rivalry are available. The virtuous Menoeceus would seem to be in perfect accord with his brother Haemon as they fight side by side (*Theb.* 10.650–4). These initial appearances are deceptive, however: the personification of Virtus encourages Menoeceus to commit suicide in order to save Thebes before his brother does (10.671), and he accordingly deceives his father with a lying story of his concern for Haemon's welfare before retreating to commit suicide (10.727–34). Siblings only manage to cooperate when the stakes are low, such as Hypsipyle's sons at the horse race (6.345). As with Argia's love for her dead husband, death appears to offer the most propitious occasion for the perfect expression of fraternal *pietas*. Pairs of brothers joined in an embrace at the moment of death (3.167–8, 8.448, 10.314), like the loving Thespiads killed by Tydeus (2.640–3), create a punctual contrast to the divided pyre of Eteocles and Polynices (12.429–46).

39 Coffee (2009b) 241–71.

40 Braund (1996c).

41 Henderson (1998b) 234–40.

Statius' Antigone undermines some of these associations, however, between bereavement and perfect *pietas* between siblings. She is Polynices' sole supporter as he departs from the Theban court, and like her mother supplicates him in an effort to stop his duel with Eteocles (*Theb.* 2.313–15, 11.363–82). Yet Antigone fails to reprise her expected role after her brother's death: she finds Argia already arrived from Argos to bury her husband and condemns *pietas ignaua sororis* ("a sister's lazy *pietas*," 12.384). Through this calculated deviation from the dominant mythological tradition, Statius suggests the primacy of elective over blood relationships, a theme that he develops in far greater detail in the *Silvae*. The narrative partially redeems Antigone's failure by comparing both women to the Heliades burying their brother Phaethon (12.413–15), an image of sister-like cooperation that offers a punctual contrast to the brothers' divided pyre.

Fosterers and Surrogates

Statius' sensitive representations of the fosterage relationship in the *Silvae* and the *Achilleid* constitute one of his most original contributions to the Roman poetic tradition.⁴² He inaugurates the second book of the *Silvae* with extended praise of Atedius Melior for his fosterage of the freedman Glaucias, who died at the age of 12. Melior's care for the child and grief at his bereavement serves as proof of this master's exceptional ethical qualities: he is compared to Chiron, the ideal fosterer of the *Achilleid* (*Silv.* 2.1.87–9).⁴³ In their extant form, the *Silvae* conclude with the poet's lament upon the death of his own foster child (5.5), though Statius did not live to edit the fifth book for publication.⁴⁴ As in his earlier encomium of Melior, Statius represents his act of fosterage as at least equivalent, if not superior, to natural parenthood:

quid plus tribuere parentes?
 Quin alios ortus libertatemque sub ipsis
 uberibus tibi, parue, dedi, cum munera nostra
 rideres ignarus adhuc.

SILV. 5.5.72–5

42 Fantham (1999a).

43 Bernstein (2005); Zeiner (2005) 160–71.

44 Gibson (2006) xxxviii–xlii.

What more did your parents give you? Indeed, little boy, I gave you another set of origins and freedom while you were still on the breast, though as yet unaware you laughed at my gift.

These examples of fosterage occur between masters and their freed slaves. The idealized fosterage relationship of the *Achilleid*⁴⁵ presents a more typical hierarchical relationship in which the fosterer is of much lower social status than his charge. Chiron fosters Achilles at the behest of a social superior, the goddess Thetis. The narrative describes Chiron as his charge's *magister* ("master," *Achil.* 1.39) and *nutritor* ("nourisher," 1.276), terms associated with the lower-status caregivers who provided most real-life Roman fosterage.⁴⁶ The relationship between the centaur and the young hero is close and loving: Achilles prefers to sleep in his fosterer's embrace rather than his mother's (1.195–7), and Chiron experiences feelings of grief upon Achilles' departure similar to those of the bereaved fosterers of the *Silvae* (*Achil.* 1.232–6).

As Thetis repeatedly laments, Chiron's attentive nurture of Achilles only prepares him for the martial career that will bring about his early death. The *Thebaid* presents only the negative aspects of fosterage: fosterers are either deliberately vicious or fatally negligent. As he demands Tisiphone's help in destroying his sons, Oedipus identifies himself as the Fury's fosterling: *si me de matre cadentem / fouisti gremio. . . . natosque tibi, scis ipsa, paraui* ("You nurtured me in your lap as I dropped from my mother. . . . You yourself know that I got my children for you," *Theb.* 1.59–60, 70). In fear of her father's anger after her rape by Apollo, Psamathe leaves her illegitimate child Linus to be raised by a negligent shepherd who allows dogs to tear the infant apart (1.578–90). A snake kills the infant Opheltes as his fosterer Hypsipyle relates the lengthy story of her exile to the Argives (5.505–40).⁴⁷ An image of Linus appears on Archemorus' bier (6.64–5), drawing a visual connection between the *Thebaid*'s two narratives of fatally negligent fosterage. Like most other family feelings in Statius' epics, the attempt to display virtue through the nurture of an unrelated child leads to destruction.

45 Fantham (1999a); Heslin (2005) 170–5.

46 Bradley (1991) 37–75.

47 Augoustakis (2010b) 37–61.

Friends, Citizens, and the Rhetoric of Symbolic Kinship

Statius' bold extension of metaphor has long been recognized as one of the most striking aspects of his poetic style, if not one that always yields the most felicitous results. Each of his works applies the metaphor of kinship to a wide variety of relationships where no familial link is present. These include both traditional metaphors of kinship, such as the comparison of friends to brothers⁴⁸ and of the emperor's subjects to a kindly father's children,⁴⁹ as well as more unusual and innovative comparisons. In *Silvae* 4.5, Statius expresses his gratitude to Septimius Severus for his support as he competed at Domitian's Alban festival.⁵⁰ He compares this ideal performance of friendship to the support given by Castor the ideal brother as Pollux fought with the monster Amycus:

cum tu sodalis dulce periculum
conisus omni pectore tolleres,
ut Castor ad cunctos tremebat
Bebryciae strepitus harenae.

SILV. 4.5.25–8

When you bore the sweet danger for your friend, striving with your whole breast, just as Castor trembled at every noise of the Bebrycian sands.

Later in the poem, Statius endeavors to clear doubts about Septimius' North African origins by emphasizing his Italian dress, speech, and sensibility (*Silv.* 4.5.45–8). His metaphor of fraternity thus bridges the divide not only between families but also between provinces and cultures.

In the *Thebaid*, where biological fraternity is a destructive force, the symbolic fraternity of arms also threatens to symbolically replace the biological family. Statius repeats and varies an Iliadic simile, the comparison of Menelaus protecting the corpse of Patroclus as a cow protects her calf (*Il.* 17.3–6), to describe the “maternal” care that his warriors displays toward the bodies of their fallen comrades, as in the cases of Hippomedon and Dymas (*Theb.* 9.115–19, 10.414–19). Fighting men who have deserted their wives for war establish symbolic “marriages” instead with their horses. Prothous and his horse are joined like a vine with an elm (8.539–47), one of the *topoi* of Roman marriage

48 See above, pp. 148–50.

49 Stevenson (1992).

50 Hardie (2003) 135–42.

(e.g., *Silv.* 5.1.48–50, Catull. 62.49–58), and horses can be comparably described as “widowed” (*uiduis*, 12.26) when their riders die.

The *Thebaid* narrates numerous episodes of dynastic violence that ensue as the result of contested successions to the throne by a monarch’s biological descendants.⁵¹ A more orderly form of succession can be established, however, where the stakes are lower and biological descent is not a requirement. The narrative compares Thiodamas when he is chosen to be Amphiaraus’ *successor* (*Theb.* 8.276) to a Parthian prince assuming the throne vacated by his father (8.286–93).⁵² The Argives later rush out to meet him like chicks going to meet a mother bird (10.458–62). Statius thereby refashions the traditional comparison between ruler and father in order to describe this new prophet of the Argives, who wields influence over his followers without suffering the corruption associated with monarchy. The *Silvae* restore the positive associations between imperial rule and fatherhood, repeatedly hailing Domitian as the benevolent father of a grateful people (e.g., *Silv.* 3.4.48, 4.1.17, 4.2.14–15, 4.8.20).

As Newlands observes, “the failure of the metaphor of ‘mother earth’ in the *Thebaid* is striking and unusual” in comparison to other Roman epics.⁵³ The earth no longer plays its typical symbolic role of “maternal” nurturer. Dried-up rivers drive the Argives to Nemea, while the chasm that swallows up the prophet Amphiaraus causes the survivors to worry that the land will withhold even the most essential form of support.⁵⁴ The transfer of reproduction from human mothers to the land itself embeds a destructive legacy in the city’s origins. The earthborn warriors who sprout from the dragon’s teeth sowed by Cadmus fight the paradigmatic first civil war at Thebes that condemns future generations to repeat their example.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Statius’ sophisticated use of kinship discourse demonstrates his creative independence with respect to the lengthy poetic traditions that precede him. Representation of kin relationships assists the poet in creating space for new works in the multiple genres in which he composes. The pessimistic *Thebaid* depicts a world where most familial relationships have been disrupted or

51 See above, pp. 140–2.

52 Hollis (1994).

53 Newlands (2006) 207; cf. Keith (2000) 59–64.

54 Keith (2000) 57–64; on Tellus in the *Punica*, see Augoustakis (2010b) 144–51.

55 Bernstein (2008) 171–9.

perverted. By placing the feud between Oedipus' sons at the center of its narrative, the epic marks its independence from the *Aeneid*, its self-described primary model (*Theb.* 12.816), where the mutually supportive Aeneadae offer more optimistic visions of the patriarchal family. Familial conflict in the *Achilleid* draws the epic in a new direction from Homer's version of the Achilles narrative, one where maternal pressure and Ovidian eroticism temporarily prevail over honor and glory.

On the level of narrative, kinship is one of the major conceptual frames of reference through which Statius' characters make sense of their identities. Rival conceptual paradigms of kinship, from dynastic succession to social brotherhood, appear in a wide variety of circumstances. The inability to break free of the pattern established by their ancestors' crimes shapes the destiny of most of the *Thebaid's* Theban characters. Competing interpretations of the significance of Achilles' descent, as father's son destined to become the paradigmatic epic warrior or as mother's son unsuccessfully concealed from the war, drive the young hero's conflicts with his mother Thetis.

Kinship narrative also provides Statius with a means to bear witness to the social changes of his generation, in which an elite class that attributed comparatively less importance to descent than to other forms of distinction came to prominence. The epics reflect upon the limitations of a descent-based ideology through their representation of sons whose emulation of their ancestors leads them to disaster. Statius' encomia of friends and patrons in the *Silvae* celebrate virtuous familial conduct (where possible), yet also remain alert to the "fault lines" in Flavian ideology regarding kinship and descent. Statius reflects his contemporaries' prioritization of the "made" over the "given" in human relationships by attributing more positive value to the elective relationships formed over the life course (such as marriage, fosterage, and friendship) than to the unchosen blood relationships inherited at birth.⁵⁶

56 I extend my sincerest thanks to William Dominik, Carole Newlands, and Kyle Gervais not only as editors of this volume but also for many years of mentorship and friendship towards me.

PART 4

Transgressive Poetics: The Achilleid



Statius' *Achilleid*: The Paradoxical Epic

Peter J. Davis

Statius' *Achilleid* is a paradox. A narrative written in hexameters whose central character is of prime importance to the heroic tradition, this poem is clearly an epic or at least the beginning of one. From the outset it alludes to major epic texts, to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, to Vergil's *Aeneid* and Valerius' *Argonautica*. But, like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the *Achilleid* is a poem which breaks the rules. Aristotle had advised against constructing an epic around a hero's life story (*Poet.* 1451a) and yet that is precisely what Statius proposes to do (*Achil.* 1.4–5). He alludes, moreover, to erotic poets like Catullus and Ovid and deals with subject matter (rape and cross-dressing) which is more characteristic of comedy and elegy than epic poetry. This chapter will explore the paradoxical character of this immensely rich and rewarding text, paying particular attention to its generic affinities, its allusive range, and its thematic coherence.

The *Achilleid* proclaims its generic complexity from the outset. First we should note that this poem begins by addressing not one god but two:¹

Magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti
progeniem et patrio uetitam succedere caelo,
diua, refer. quamquam acta uiri multum inclita cantu
Maeonio (sed plura uacant), nos ire per omnem—
sic amor est—heroa uelis Scyroque latentem
Dulichia proferre tuba nec in Hectore tracto
sistere, sed tota iuuenem deducere Troia.
tu modo, si ueterem digno depleuimus haustu,
da fontes mihi, Phoebe, nouos ac fronde secunda
necte comas: neque enim Aonium nemus aduena pulso
nec mea nunc primis augescunt tempora uititis.
scit Dircaeus ager meque inter prisca parentum
nomina cumque suo numerant Amphione Thebae.

ACHIL. 1.1–13

1 See also the discussion of this passage in Ganiban, pp. 73–5 in this volume.

Goddess, tell of great-hearted Aeacides, offspring feared by the Thunderer, forbidden to succeed to his father's heaven. Although the hero's deeds are much famed in Homeric song (but much remains untold), may you be willing (such is my love) that I go through the whole hero and produce him by means of Ulysses' trumpet as he hides on Scyros and not stop with the dragging of Hector, but draw out the young man's story through all of Troy. Now, Phoebus, grant me fresh springs, if we have exhausted the old one with worthy draught, and bind my hair with second/auspicious leaves: not as a stranger do I knock at the Aonian grove nor are my temples honored now with first headbands. Dirce's land knows it and Thebes counts me among her ancestors' ancient names along with her Amphion.

As Homer invokes his unnamed goddess (*thea*, *Il.* 1.1), so Statius invokes his *diua*, his anonymous "goddess" (*Achil.* 1.3). Words like *magnanimus* ("great-hearted," 1) and *Aeaciden* ("descendant of Aeacus," 1) have an epic flavor. The Greek equivalent of *magnanimus*, *megathumos*, occurs frequently in the *Iliad*² and *magnanimus* itself occurs primarily in epic texts in Latin,³ while Aeacides is a regular descriptor of Achilles in the *Iliad*.⁴ Indeed, Statius virtually names the *Iliad* (*cantu* / *Maeonio*, "Maeonian [i.e., Homeric] song," 3–4): where the *Iliad* stopped with Hector's burial, the *Achilleid* aspires to complete the story.⁵

After seven lines addressed to the goddess (*Achil.* 1.1–7), Statius now addresses six lines to Phoebus (8–13). Apollo seems a strange god to invoke at the beginning of a poem about Achilles. First, he was a pro-Trojan divinity, who was, in some accounts, responsible for Achilles' death.⁶ Second, he is a decidedly un-martial deity and so he is not invoked by the poet in either the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*. It is true that Apollonius had addressed Apollo in the first line of his *Argonautica*, but that too was an odd choice for, as DeForest points out, Apollo was "the god who dissuaded poets from writing epic poetry."⁷

2 *Megathumos* occurs 62 times in the *Iliad*.

3 *Magnanimus* is recorded as occurring 103 times in the texts contained in the Packard Humanities Institute database (omitting Terentianus Maurus and Servius who both quote Vergil). 66 of these occur in epic texts (*De Rerum Natura*, *Aeneid*, *Metamorphoses*, *De Bello Civili*, *Argonautica*, *Punica*, and *Thebaid*).

4 *Aiakides* is used 24 times in the *Iliad*.

5 As Barchiesi (1996) 50 observes: "Questa continuità suggerisce una differenza di ambizione. La *Tebaide* era destinata a seguire con ritardo adorante la scia dell'*Eneide*: l'*Achilleide*, con molto minore scrupolo, si misura direttamente, e fin da principio, con l'*Illiade*, di cui costituisce sia diretta alternativa, sia integrazione."

6 E.g., Quint. Smyrn. 3.53–85.

7 DeForest (1994) 39. She notes Callim. *Aet.* frag. 1.21–9 and *Hymn Hom. Ap.* 2.105–13, and compares Verg. *Ecl.* 6.3–8; Prop. 3.3.13–26; Hor. *Carm.* 4.15; and Ov. *Ars Am.* 2.493–510.

But there are other features of the proem that suggest that this will not be an epic of the conventional kind. The choice of a four-word hexameter as the opening line is extraordinary. Such lines are clearly meant to impress.⁸ While it is true that they occur in earlier epic poets,⁹ they seem to be particularly characteristic of Ovid¹⁰ and perhaps hint at the poem's erotic subject matter. Vocabulary is also important. That an epic poet should speak of his own *amor* ("love," *Achil.* 1.5) is surprising. So too is his use of the verb *deducere* ("draw out," 7), a term that suggests that this epic, like *Metamorphoses*, will be a *deductum carmen* ("fine-spun song"; cf. *Ov. Met.* 1.4).¹¹

But the *Achilleid's* proem actually has a third addressee, Domitian, invoked simply as *tu* ("you," 1.14) and given the same number of lines as Apollo. Perhaps because emperors like Augustus apparently enjoyed references to themselves in serious works by outstanding writers (*Suet. Aug.* 89.3), it had become conventional to address the emperor early in an epic poem. So Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, Valerius' *Argonautica*, and Statius' own *Thebaid* address the ruling Caesar within the first hundred lines.¹² Since epic was both the pre-eminent literary genre and the appropriate medium for the celebration of military

8 As Mayer (1981) argues on *Luc.* 8.407: "Müller holds the view that the very paucity of examples argues that the poets did not see the device as an elegance. But four word lines are not easy to compose, and they are especially hard to bring off in the developed hexameter which eschews words of four or five syllables at the close. It is easy *not* to write a four word line. Müller's view is therefore unlikely to be correct."

9 E.g., *Hom. Il.* 1.189, *Ap. Rhod.* 1.3, *Enn. Ann.* 7.216 Skutsch, *Catull.* 64.15, *Verg. Aen.* 1.80, *Luc.* 1.653. For the programmatic character of such lines, see Heslin (2005) 73. See also Barchiesi (1996) 50–1 (with further references).

10 Winbolt (1903) 228 claims that "Ovid is very fond of such lines." Certainly *Metamorphoses* contains some bravura examples, e.g., 1.690; 2.561, 605; 4.173, 497. It should also be noted that some of Ovid's flashiest lines are four-word pentameters (e.g., *Ars Am.* 2.24 [a favorite of Ovid's if the elder Seneca is to be believed, *Controv.* 2.2.12], 3.322; *Tr.* 4.7.18). Kenney (2001) 265 notes that there are 59 examples of four-word hexameters in *Metamorphoses*, but only 23 in *Aeneid*.

11 As Barchiesi (1996) 58–9 notes: "Se gli dei accontentano Ovidio, e *deducunt* la poesia, il risultato sarà anche un *deductum carmen*—ma un *deductum carmen* è normalmente il contrario di un *perpetuum carmen*. Una contraddizione in termini che Stazio ripropone, accompagnando la vita di Achille, ma forse anche 'assottigliando' secondo le lezioni della poesia alessandrina e dell'elegia dell'amore." For the metaliterary connotations of *deducere*, see Kenney (1976). See also Koster (1979) 195–6; Hardie (1993) 63 n. 8; Hinds (1998) 142 n. 26.

12 The exception is of course Silius Italicus, who follows Vergil's precedent and praises Domitian in a prophecy of Jupiter (*Sil.* 3.607–29).

achievement, this too is a generic marker, even if it involves apology for refusing or postponing glorification of the emperor's successes.¹³

The *Achilleid's* proem thus points to the work's paradoxical character: this poem both asserts and undercuts its claim to epic status. The contradictory expectations created by the proem are fulfilled in the body of the poem. Consider, for example, Statius' representation of Chiron, the figure who presides over Achilles' education. For Homer, Chiron is a complex figure. He is "the most just of the Centaurs" (δικαιότατος Κενταύρων) and the source of Achilles' knowledge of medicine (*Il.* 11.831–2).¹⁴ But he is also the origin of the Pelian ash spear, a weapon that only Achilles can handle (16.139–44, 19.387–91). In Latin literature, however, as Fantham points out,¹⁵ Chiron is associated almost exclusively with peace. She cites Horace's *Epodi* 13.12–18, Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 1.11–18, and *Fasti* 5.379–416. Here are some lines from *Fasti* 5 describing Chiron's death:

ille manus olim missuras Hectora leto
creditur in lyricis detinuisse modis.

.....

saepe manus aegras manibus fingeat amicis:
morum, quos fecit, praemia doctor habet.

OV. *FAST.* 5.385–6, 409–10

Chiron is believed to have restrained in lyric song the hands destined to send Hector to his death. . . . Achilles often caressed those feeble hands with his loving hands: the teacher receives the reward of the character he had made.

Before Statius only a Senecan chorus associates Chiron with the martial side of Achilles' nature (*Tro.* 830–5).

How then does Statius represent Chiron? Thetis' arrival prompts this description of Chiron's home:

at intra
Centaury stabula alta patent, non aequa nefandis
fratribus: hic hominum nullos experta cruores

13 For discussion of possible political ramifications of this address to Domitian, see Penwill (2000).

14 Cf. Ov. *Fast.* 5.413: *iustissime Chiron* ("Chiron most just").

15 Fantham (2003) 113–14.

spicula nec truncae bellis genialibus orni
aut consanguineos fracti crateres in hostes,
sed pharetrae insontes et inania terga ferarum.

ACHIL. 1.110–15

But within extend the Centaur's high stables, unlike his wicked brothers: here are no darts experienced in human blood, no ash trees maimed in marriage wars or wine bowls smashed on kindred foes, but innocent quivers and the hollow backs of beasts.

The criminal violence of the Centaurs was legendary, familiar from Homer (*Il.* 1.262–8, 2.742–4; *Od.* 21.295–304), from the metopes on the south side of the Parthenon, the frieze of the temple of Apollo at Bassae, and from Nestor's narrative in *Metamorphoses* 12. The use of the extraordinary phrase *bellis genialibus* ("marriage wars") suggests that Statius has in mind primarily the murderous battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs at the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia, a struggle famous for its use of improvised weapons. Equally extraordinary is the fact that the poet describes not the items which adorn Chiron's dwelling, but those which do not, for Chiron is presented in these lines as wholly unlike his brother Centaurs: his violence is confined to the guilt-free hunting of wild beasts. And even that belongs to Chiron's past (*haec quoque dum uiridis*, *Achil.* 1.116). Like Homer, Statius refers to his medical skill (117) and, like Ovid, he mentions his music (118).

But the music that this Chiron teaches is not as Ovid had imagined it, for in the *Achilleid* the Centaur's task is "to expound with his lyre the heroes of old to his ward" (*monstrare lyra ueteres heroas alumno*, *Achil.* 1.118). And we know that Chiron taught his charge well, for when Ajax, Odysseus, and Phoenix encounter Achilles in *Iliad* 9, they find him "singing of men's fame" (ἄειδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν, 9.189); and in the *Achilleid* too Thetis hears him sing of "the savage seeds of glory" (*inmania laudum / semina*, 1.188–9). If we turn to Achilles' own account of his education in book 2, we find that it is not of the kind that Thetis might infer from the state of Chiron's dwelling, for Achilles explains that Chiron would not let him hunt tame creatures but only the most savage beasts (2.121–5) and gave him specifically military instruction, explaining the characteristic weapons of various warrior tribes (130–6), training him in battle skills and violent sports (140–3, 155–6). The *Achilleid's* Chiron is ambiguous: he is both a pacific and martial figure.

But Chiron's ambiguity involves more than his attitude to peace and war. While some Latin poets seem to ignore Chiron's biform nature (e.g., Catull. 64.79, Prop. 2.1.60, Verg. *G.* 3.550; but cf. Ov. *Fast.* 5.379–80), Statius emphasizes

his intermediate position between the realms of beast and human. Consider the description of Thetis' encounter with the Centaur:

erumpit siluis—dant gaudia uires—
 notaque desueto crepuit senis ungula campo.
 tunc blandus dextra atque imos demissus in armos
 pauperibus tectis inducit et admonet antri.

ACHIL. 1.122–5

He bursts out of the forest—joy gives him strength—and the old man's familiar hoof clatters on the unaccustomed plain. Then, gentle and stooping to lower his fore-quarters, he leads her by the right hand into his poor dwelling and warns her of the cave.

Both verbally and metrically 1.123 recalls Vergil's famous lines representing horses galloping over the plain (*Aen.* 8.596, 11.875)¹⁶ and so reminds us that Chiron is part horse. On the other hand, *senex*, when used as a noun as it is here, means "old man" and so recalls Chiron's human aspect.¹⁷ And the point is reinforced in the next sentence, for *armus*, as the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* tells us, is the "fore-quarter or shoulder (of an animal; as opp. to *VMERVS* of a man)." Possession of "fore-quarters" marks Chiron as animal, while his *dextra* ("right hand") implies humanity. In a similar way Statius uses the high poetic word *lumina* for Chiron's eyes, while also reminding us of his equine nature at 1.234–5. As a quintessentially ambiguous being, Chiron is an appropriate emblem of the *Achilleid's* generic status.

Statius' narrative strategies also underline the poem's paradoxical nature. Consider, for example, his treatment of the storm motif. By Statius' time a storm was an epic fixture. Homer's *Odyssey* had included a major description of a storm at sea (5.291–387), as had Apollonius' *Argonautica* (2.1093–122). Vergil, Ovid, Lucan, and Valerius had all produced spectacular storms.¹⁸ Statius too had entered the lists in the *Thebaid*, innovating by transferring his storm from sea to land (1.336–89).

How then does Statius handle this *topos* in the *Achilleid*? The epic's action begins in a manner that overtly recalls the *Aeneid's* opening, with a ship sailing and an angry goddess. Just as Juno resents the imminent end of Aeneas' voyage from Troy to Italy, so Thetis is angered by Paris' journey from Sparta back to

16 For additional examples, see Dilke (1954) 93.

17 *Senex* is also used of Chiron at *Achil.* 1.143 and 182. The *OLD* records *senex* used in connection with non-humans only when it functions adjectivally.

18 For a survey of storms in both Greek and Roman epic, see Friedrich (1956).

Troy. The events are of course connected: Paris' abduction of Helen will ultimately lead to Troy's destruction and Aeneas' flight. And the goddesses respond in similar fashion, for they seek to have their enemy's fleet destroyed by means of a storm. Each goddess approaches a sea god and attempts to induce him to destroy her enemy's fleet. There are of course significant differences in the way each goddess sets about her task: Juno gives Aeolus commands and a bribe (*Aen.* 1.65–75), while Thetis appeals to Neptune's sense of fairness, denouncing Paris' acts as criminal (*Achil.* 1.61–76). These differences are readily explained: Juno is dealing with an underling, while Thetis is supplicating a superior.

But this is not the only epic opening which is brought to bear on Statius' proem, for Thetis invokes that complex of ideas surrounding the first sea voyage that had been treated most recently in Valerius' *Argonautica*:

O magni genitor rectorque profundi,
aspicis in qualis miserum patefeceris usus
aequor? eunt tutis terrarum crimina uelis,
ex quo iura freti maiestatemque repostam
rupit Iasonia puppis Pagasaea rapina.

ACHIL. 1.61–5

O father and ruler of the mighty deep, do you see to what ends you opened the wretched sea? The land's crimes travel safely under sail, since that time when Pagasae's ship burst through ocean's laws and distant majesty with Jason's desire for plunder.

Where Valerius' Jason is positive about opening the sea to new ends (*pelagus quantos aperimus in usus!*, V. Fl. 1.169), Thetis is distressed, for she links Jason's crossing of the sea with the Trojan war and her son's coming death. Indeed, she agrees with Valerius' Jupiter, for he too views Paris' seizure of Helen as repayment for Jason's abduction of Medea (V. Fl. 1.550–1). But the links are as much structural as ideological: in *Argonautica* too a sea voyage arouses resentment, for Boreas is hostile to Argo's journey and concerned to protect his quarter of the world.

While the similarities between all three epics are striking, it must be acknowledged that Statius prompts our memories of Vergil and Valerius only to defeat the expectations that they create. In both Vergil and Valerius a request to Aeolus is followed by a storm that is quelled by Neptune.¹⁹ The

19 There are of course differences: Vergil's Neptune provides a model for the man respected for piety (*pietate grauem*, *Aen.* 1.151), while Valerius' god yields to Juno and Minerva, mainly because he relishes weird deaths in the future (1.642–50).

Achilleid's Neptune, though promising storms to come, actually refuses Thetis' request (1.80–94). If the *Thebaid's* innovation was to have a storm on land, the *Achilleid's* novelty is to offer the prospect of a storm and then withhold it. So Statius draws attention to the absence of this epic *topos*.

We see a similar complexity when we examine Statius' use of allusion in his representation of the poem's central character. Given that this poem aims to supplement the *Iliad* (*Achil.* 1.3–7), it is not surprising that aspects of its hero are closely modeled on the Homeric Achilles. Achilles of course has a heroic future, as Neptune predicts (*Achil.* 1.84–9). More importantly, that future is foreshadowed in the narrator's and Achilles' own accounts of his training and behavior. We are reminded, for example, of Achilles' friendship with Patroclus. At 1.174 the narrator mentions their great love, while Achilles himself speaks of his friend with envy:

tu nunc tela manu, nostros tu dirigis arcus
nutritosque mihi scandis, Patrocle, iugales?

ACHIL. 1.632–3

Do you now aim my weapons, my bow, with your hand, do you mount the chariot team that was raised for me, Patroclus?

Achilles speaks with envy because he can no longer endure the suppression of his manhood and longs to go to Troy; he cannot bear the idea that Patroclus might go in his place. But there is irony in his words, for this is precisely the situation that will obtain in *Iliad* 16, when Patroclus enters battle wearing Achilles' arms. That Statius intends us to make this connection is clear from Achilles' reference a few lines earlier to swimming the river Sperchius and to dedicating his hair (*quaerisne meos, Sperchie, natatus / promissasque comas?*, "do you miss my swims, Sperchius and the hair I promised?", 1.628–9), for these lines allude to *Iliad* 23, to Achilles' action at Patroclus' funeral:

στὰς ἀπάνευθε πυρῆς ξανθὴν ἀπεκείρατο χαίτην,
τὴν ῥά Σπερχειῷ ποταμῷ τρέφε τηλεθόωσαν.

HOM. IL. 23.141–2

Standing apart from the pyre, he cut his golden hair, which he had nurtured, luxuriant, to give to the river Sperchius.

Although he cannot know it, Achilles' words foreshadow Patroclus' death.

We see a similar use of allusion to the *Iliad* in *Achilleid* 2. When Ulysses explains to Achilles Greek anger at the abduction of Helen, he alludes to Agenor's resentment at the loss of Europa and Aeetes' anger at the theft of Medea (2.72–7). He then puts the argument in immediately personal terms: how would you respond if your Deidamia were taken away from you? Achilles' response to the question is not words, but action, for he puts his hand to his sword, just as he will do when Agamemnon abducts Briseis (*Il.* 1.188–95). So too elements of his education foreshadow Iliadic events. Achilles tells how Chiron has instructed him in struggling against rivers (*Achil.* 2.146–53), a lesson that will prove useful in his battle with the river Scamander (*Il.* 23.211–83). In similar fashion, when Achilles refers to Chiron's instruction in law and medicine (*Achil.* 2.159–65), he confirms the truth of Eurypylus' claim in the *Iliad* that Chiron was "most just" and that he instructed Achilles in the art of healing (*Il.* 11.831–2).

But if the future Achilles, the Achilles of the *Iliad*, is a model for Statius' youthful hero, so too are other figures familiar from epic tradition. At *Achilleid* 1.322 Thetis expresses her wish for a grandson in a significant way: *atque alium portare sinu contingat Achillem!* ("if only I could carry another Achilles in my lap!"). For readers of the *Aeneid* Thetis' words recall the Sybil's claim that Italy already has "another Achilles": *alius Latio iam partus Achilles* ("another Achilles is already born in/for Latium," *Aen.* 6.89).²⁰ Within the battle books of the *Aeneid* that description best fits Aeneas²¹ and so it is not surprising that in the *Achilleid*, the situation is reversed and we find that Aeneas now becomes a model for Achilles.

When Achilles enters the poem he enters in terms which recall Vergil's description of Aeneas early in *Aeneid* 4. Achilles, returning from the hunt, is sweaty, but still beautiful:²²

niueo natat ignis in ore
purpureus fuluoque nitet coma gratior auro.

ACHIL. 1.161–2

Fire swims on his snowy face and his hair glows more pleasing than tawny gold.

20 See Ahl's note on this line (2007) 365: "*Latio* is ambiguous: the new Achilles is born either 'for Latium' or 'in Latium': he could be either Aeneas or his opponent Turnus."

21 See, e.g., Anderson (1990); Boyle (1986) 154–6.

22 See also the discussion of this passage by Chinn, pp. 174–5 in this volume.

So too Vergil emphasizes Aeneas' beauty as he sets out to hunt: *haud illo segnior ibat / Aeneas, tantum egregio decus enitet ore* ("with no less vigor went Aeneas, just so much grace glows on his handsome face," *Aen.* 4.149–50). If the verbal connection seems slight, the parallel is secured by Statius' choice of simile:

qualis Lycia uenator Apollo
cum redit et saeuis permutat plectra pharetris.

ACHIL. 1.165–6

Just like Apollo the hunter, when he returns from Lycia and swaps savage quiver for the plectrum.

This clearly summarizes Vergil's more elaborate simile used to depict Aeneas as he joins Dido for the hunt. Like Statius, Vergil has Apollo leaving Lycia (*Aen.* 4.143–4), while Statius has clearly transferred the gold in Vergil's simile (*auro*, *Aen.* 4.148) to the description of his hero (*auro*, *Theb.* 1.162).

And the connection is made still stronger when Statius likens Deidamia to Diana:

aut umeris quantum Diana relinquit
Naidas, effulget tantum regina decori
Deidamia chori pulchrisque sororibus obstat.

ACHIL. 1.294–6

Or as much as Diana's shoulders overtop the Naiads, so much does Deidamia blaze forth, queen of the lovely chorus, and outshine her lovely sisters.

Dido too is likened to Diana (*Aen.* 1.498–502). Here too Statius transfers details from a Vergilian simile to his description of Deidamia, for Diana bears a quiver on her shoulder (*umero*) and is taller than all the goddesses (*deas supereminet omnis*, 1.501). The significance of adapting Vergil's paired similes is clear: the relationship between Achilles and Deidamia resembles that of Dido and Aeneas.²³

A second important model for Achilles is Jason. He too belongs to the epic tradition, having figured in the Argonautic poems of Apollonius of Rhodes and Valerius Flaccus. That it is the Valerian Jason that is important is clear from Statius' treatment of Argo as the first ship and the Minyan expedition as the

23 For this, see Feeney (2004) 89–91.

first sea voyage, for that issue is central to the Flavian epic but not to that of Apollonius.²⁴ It is noteworthy that Statius raises this issue each time he alludes to Jason, in Thetis' appeal to Neptune (*Achil.* 1.61–5) and in Ulysses' speech to Achilles (2.75–7), and even when he does not (1.361–2). Moreover, the connection between Valerius' epic and the *Achilleid* is clearly established by the explicit allusion that I noted earlier. Thetis' words at 1.62–3 (*aspicis in qualis miserum patefeceris usus / aequor?*, “do you see to what ends you opened the wretched sea?”) clearly recall Jason's words to Acastus at *Argonautica* 1.169 (*pelagus quantos aperimus in usus!*, “to what great ends are we opening the sea!”).²⁵ Here then is another epic model for the Statian Achilles.²⁶

A third epic model for Achilles is the *Thebaid*'s version of Theseus. One curious aspect of the *Achilleid* is the frequency of its references to Amazons. Thetis expresses concern to Lycomedes that her imaginary daughter shuns marriage “Amazon-style” (*Amazonio . . . ritu*, *Achil.* 1.353). The narrator likens Lycomedes' daughters to Amazons when they enter the dining hall (1.758–60) and when they dance (833). Thetis' description of her “daughter's” rejection of marriage as Amazon-like can readily be interpreted as foreshadowing Achilles' ambiguous sexual status: Amazons are quasi-masculine females, while Achilles is to become a quasi-feminine male. But how do Lycomedes' daughters resemble Amazons? They are not quasi-masculine; they show no aversion to marriage.

To answer this question we need to turn, I suggest, to *Thebaid* 12, to compare the description of Theseus' return from his conquest of the Amazons (*Theb.* 12.523–8) with the entry of Lycomedes' daughters (*Achil.* 1.758–60). In one sense, these two entrances could hardly be more different, since the *Thebaid*'s Amazons are defeated, while the *Achilleid*'s are victorious. Note, however, that these two passages have two elements in common: emphasis on the separation of these women from their weapons and Statius' only references to lake Maeotis (*Theb.* 12.526, *Achil.* 1.758).

But in *Thebaid* 12 Statius singles out one Amazon for special treatment, Hippolyte, just as in the *Achilleid* he singles out one of Lycomedes' daughters, Deidamia. Consider the parallels between them. Hippolyte is pregnant to Theseus; Deidamia has borne a child to Achilles. Theseus will abandon Hippolyte in favor of heroic exploits and other women; Achilles will abandon Deidamia in favor of the Trojan war and other women, captives like Briseis and warriors

24 For Valerius' treatment of these issues see, e.g., M. A. Davis (1989) and P. J. Davis (2010).

25 The connection is pointed out by Gärtner (2000).

26 It must be acknowledged, however, that Statius' treatment of Jason owes more to Seneca than to Valerius. On this, see Davis (2006) 141.

like that other Amazon, Penthesilea. The *Thebaid's* Theseus is yet another model for Achilles.

It must be recognized, however, that it is not epic which provides the primary models for the Statian Achilles, but genres normally considered antithetical to epic, love elegy and the epyllion. Consider the case of Theseus again. While it is true that *Thebaid* 12 is an important intertext for the *Achilleid*, it is also clear that Catullus 64 is even more important.²⁷ Particularly notable is the fact that the last line of book 1 rewrites Catullus 64.59. After describing Achilles' promises and tears, Statius' narrator comments: *inrita uentosae rapiabant uerba procellae* ("the windy storms snatched away his vain words," *Achil.* 1.960). That Statius should quote a poem whose central subject is the marriage of Peleus and Thetis and the birth of Achilles seems entirely appropriate. What is striking, however, is the fact that Statius quotes Catullus' description of Theseus' abandonment of Ariadne on Naxos:

immemor at iuuenis fugiens pellit uada remis,
irrita uentosae linquens promissa procellae.

CATULL. 64.58–9

But in flight the heedless youth beats the shoals with oars, abandoning his vain promises to the windy storm.

Note that this analogy is sustained elsewhere in the *Achilleid*. Thus Thetis refers to Theseus as one of Argo's crew at 1.72 and 157. The narrator also refers explicitly to Theseus' killing of the Minotaur as one of the subjects of Achilles' song: *quanto circumdata nexu / ruperit Aegides Minoia bracchia tauri* ("with how strong a grip Aegeus' son surrounded and broke the Minotaur's arms," 1.191–2). The allusion to Catullus 64 underlines the fact that in leaving Deidamia Achilles is following in Theseus' footsteps, while the subject of Achilles' song suggests that Achilles knows what he is doing.

But the most important model for the Statian Achilles is to be found in Ovid's account of the rape of Deidamia in *Ars Amatoria* 1. The episode is densely packed with Ovidian allusions.²⁸ As Ovid's narrator is troubled by threats to Achilles' masculinity (*Ars Am.* 1.691–6), so Statius' Achilles is shamed by his lack of manly action and his performance of female tasks (*Achil.* 1.624–39).

²⁷ For the importance of Catullus 64, see Hinds (1998) 124–9 and Ganiban, pp. 76–86 in this volume. For Statius' use of Catullus 63 and 64, see Lauletta (1993).

²⁸ For discussion of Ovidian allusions in this episode, see Davis (2006); Heslin (2005) 261–7, 274–6.

As Ovid's resisting girl addresses her aggressive lover as *improbe* ("shameless," *Ars Am.* 1.665), so Achilles himself is described as *improbis* ("shameless," *Achil.* 1.569) in his pursuit of Deidamia. And Statius describes the actual rape with words and sounds that evoke the Ovidian account (*Achil.* 1.642–3; cf. *Ars Am.* 1.699–700).

How does Statius' employment of such a wide range of intertexts affect our understanding of the *Achilleid*? One effect will be to complicate the poem's generic status. Like Vergil, Statius alludes frequently to his predecessors. Allusions to Homer, to Vergil, to Valerius Flaccus, and to Statius' own *Thebaid* serve to position this poem firmly within the great tradition of epic poetry. They remind us that this too is a hexameter poem which presents a narrative concerned with one of the great warriors of the past and suggest that the *Achilleid* belongs to the same family as the *Iliad*, *Aeneid*, *Argonautica*, and *Thebaid*. But for an epic, the *Achilleid* is unusual in its density of allusions to erotic poetry, particularly to works of Catullus and Ovid. Though we call Catullus 64 an epyllion, a mini-epic, the poem's affinities lie with the works of Callimachus,²⁹ a poet famous for his rejection of epic. As for Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, its tone, metrical form, subject matter, and playful treatment of characters like Menelaus, Helen, and Andromache (2.359–72, 3.777–8) mark it out as wholly antithetical to the epic tradition. Here too the *Achilleid* is a paradox: its affinities are with both epic and anti-epic.

At this point it is pertinent to ask why Statius complicates the *Achilleid*'s generic status in this way. It is appropriate, I suggest, because of the ambiguous status of the central character:³⁰ like the *Achilleid* itself, Achilles is a bearer of contradictory properties.

These contradictions are emphasized from the outset. While Chiron speaks of Achilles' propensity to violence and his heroic potential (*Achil.* 1.149–58), the narrator presents him in a more complex fashion:

ille aderat multo sudore et puluere maior,
et tamen arma inter festinatosque labores
dulcis adhuc uisu: niueo natat ignis in ore
purpureus fuluoque nitet coma gratior auro.
necdum prima noua lanugine uertitur aetas,

29 For a recent discussion of Catullus' Callimachean practices, see Hunter (2006) 88–108.

30 As Rosati (1992) 237 notes, "Achille . . . vive un'età ambigua, di transizione fra l'infanzia e l'età adulta, un'età che è definita non tanto da caratteri suoi specifici, quanto dalla mescolanza dei caratteri delle due età confinanti, appunto quella infantile e quella adulta."

tranquillaequ faces oculis et plurima uultu
mater inest.

ACHIL. 1.159–65

He was present, made taller with much sweat and dust, and yet, in the midst of arms and hurried labors, still sweet to look upon: a glowing fire swims on his snow-white face and his hair gleams more pleasing than tawny gold. Not yet is his first youth changed with new down, and there are quiet torches in his eyes and much of his mother is in his looks.

While the first two lines confirm Chiron's emphasis on Achilles' masculinity, the rest of the passage works differently. To say that a boy is "sweet to look upon" is to suggest his effeminacy, with *dulcis* being commonly used by Statius' contemporary Martial of youths like Eutychus, Thestylus, and the emperor's own boyfriend, Earinus (6.68.4, 7.29.1, 9.16.1, 9.36.7),³¹ while the phrase *ignis in ore* ("fire on his face") is used by Statius of sweet-speaking Love himself in *Silvae* (1.2.61–2, 63–4). Note too that a snow-white complexion is characteristic of female, not male beauty in erotic contexts,³² fair skin being prized in women, but not in men.³³

Immediately after this passage, the narrator launches into the first of his paired similes modeled on those in *Aeneid* 1 and 4, comparing Achilles to Apollo (*Achil.* 1.165–6) and foreshadowing his comparison of Deidamia to Diana (294–6). It is worth noting, however, as Feeney points out,³⁴ that later the narrator also compares Achilles to Diana:

sic ubi uirginis Hecate lassata Therapnis
ad patrem fratremque redit, comes haeret eunti
mater et ipsa umeros exsertaque brachia uelat;
ipsa arcum pharetrasque locat uestemque latentem
deducit sparsosque tumet componere crines.

ACHIL. 1.344–8

Thus when Hecate returns wearied from virginal Therapnae to her father and brother, her mother accompanies her as she walks and she herself

31 See also Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.63 (of Cupid).

32 E.g., Hor. *Carm.* 2.4.3; Ov. *Am.* 2.4.39–43, 3.3.6, *Ep.* 20.120. Cf. Tib. 1.4.12 (of a boy as seen by a pederast); Prop. 2.13.53 (of Adonis).

33 See also the discussion of this passage by Chinn, pp. 174–5 in this volume.

34 Feeney (2004) 90.

covers her shoulder and exposed arms; she arranges the bow and quiver and pulls down the girt-up robe and is proud to order her disheveled hair.

The representation of Hecate is striking here. First, this simile is more developed than the earlier similes involving Apollo (*Achil.* 1.165–6) and Diana (294–5). Second, this simile is actually closer than the earlier ones to its Vergilian models, for it refers to the goddess' mother, to Diana's quiver, her weapons, and her hair (cf. *Aen.* 1.500, 502; 4.148, 149). Indeed, appropriately enough for transvestite Achilles, it draws on details from both Vergilian similes, likening Achilles to both Apollo and Diana, to Dido and Aeneas both. Third, although Hecate is usually identified with Diana in her capacity as goddess of witchcraft, she is wholly unwitchlike here: this is Diana under another name. So it is with Achilles, even if his name among the virgins was famously unknown (Suet. *Tib.* 70.3).

But this is not the only simile in which Achilles is likened to a female figure. When the girls of Scyros dance for Diomedes and the other guests, they are compared to not two goddesses but three:

qualis Siculae sub rupibus Aetnae
Naidas Hennaes inter Diana feroxque
Pallas et Elysii lucebat sponsa tyranni.

ACHIL. 1.824–6

Just as beneath the crags of Sicilian Etna, among the nymphs of Henna,
Diana shone and fierce Pallas and the Elysian tyrant's bride.

Dilke comments: "Note that the point of Statius' simile is not the comparison of Deidamia and Achilles with individual goddesses, but the fact that both shine out among the surrounding crowd."³⁵ Given the *Achilleid's* textual richness, it seems unlikely that the individual goddesses are randomly chosen. First, it should be noted that there is a significant difference between Proserpina and the others, for she has been raped by Pluto, while Minerva and Diana remain virgin goddesses. So too Deidamia has been raped by Achilles. And Diana and Minerva are appropriate analogues for Achilles: while undoubtedly female, both are associated with typically masculine pursuits, Minerva with war, Diana with the hunt. Conversely, Achilles is unquestionably masculine, but his current activities and dress mark him as female. Hence it is not surprising that he is soon likened to Pentheus in Bacchic garb (1.839–40).

35 Dilke (1954) 136.

It is important, however, to observe that Achilles' sexual status in book 1 is genuinely paradoxical: he is not simply a man in woman's dress. That paradox is underlined by Statius' references to sexual ambiguity (*ambigui . . . sexus*, 1.264, *ambiguus . . . sexus*, 337) and confirmed by his description of the process by which Thetis transforms her son into a woman: *aspicit ambiguum genetrrix cogique uolentem / iniecitque sinus* ("his mother sees his hesitation, that he is willing to be forced and casts the folds over him," 325–6). Once again, Achilles is *ambiguus*, hesitant, ambiguous. But it is the phrase *cogique uolentem* ("willing to be forced") which is most striking. It reminds us, of course, of the Ovidian teacher's comment on Achilles' rape of Deidamia (*sed uoluit uinci uiribus illa tamen*, "but she wanted to be overcome by strength," *Ars Am.* 1.700) and his doctrine that a female "no" means "yes." Statius' phrase is even more remarkable, for the idea that one can willingly be forced is genuinely paradoxical: a person who is willing is not forced, a person who is forced is not willing. In this poem Achilles is both willing and unwilling to be transformed into a girl.

The *Achilleid* is a work which purports to be an epic, but is only 1,127 lines long in its current state. It deals with a hero central to the epic tradition, but presents him as a rapist and a transvestite. It alludes to the great epics of the past, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, and Valerius' *Argonautica*, but draws equally upon Catullus at his most Callimachean and the most notorious of Ovid's erotic poems. Paradox is pervasive in the *Achilleid*, the creative force behind gender and genre transformation that makes this an original and fascinating "epic."³⁶

36 I am grateful to the Australian Research Council for its financial support.

Intertext, Metapoetry, and Visuality in the *Achilleid*

Christopher Chinn

Statius has been called the “arch-describer”¹ on the grounds that his epics contain an extremely high proportion of descriptive passages and that his ekphrastic *Silvae* are unique in Latin literature up to that point. Thus scholars have recently begun to pay attention to Statius’ descriptive technique.² This paper presents an analysis of Statius’ descriptive technique in the *Achilleid*.³ I argue that Statius uses visual language in a metaliterary fashion to consider the aesthetics of genre and narrative: I claim that what something “looks” like in Statius may be understood as a metaphor for how that thing may be read.⁴ I argue that the *Achilleid* integrates the story of Achilles’ coming of age with changes in how his appearance is interpreted. These changes are themselves mapped onto a metapoetic consideration of genre according to which the poem’s identity as a text is linked to the ways in which Achilles is seen. I then examine the various intertexts established in Statius’ description of Achilles. It will be seen that Statius’ borrowing from his predecessors involves a complicated metapoetic commentary on genre. Finally I examine the reception of Statius’ description of Achilles and claim that these later writers acknowledge Statius’ metapoetic use of visual language.

Achilles Described

The *Achilleid* opens *in medias res* with Thetis worrying about Achilles’ future. Thetis decides to retrieve her son from Chiron, who has been charged with

1 Lovatt (2002) 73.

2 E.g., Szelest (1966); Vessey (1973) 10–11; A. Hardie (1983) 128–36; Taisne (1994b); Lovatt (2002); Newlands (2002) 38–45 *et passim*; Keith (2007); McNelis (2008). Older treatments: Friedländer (1912) 60–9 and Duncan (1913).

3 Annotated bibliography on the *Achilleid*: Coleman (2003) 24–37, to which add Hinds (2000); Kytzler (2002); Fantham (2003); Feeney (2004); Barchiesi (2005); Heslin (2005).

4 Metapoetic metaphors in the *Achilleid*: Hinds (1998) 123–9.

the boy's early education. Shortly after Thetis arrives in Chiron's cave, Achilles appears:⁵

ille aderat multo sudore et puluere maior,
et tamen arma inter festinatosque labores
dulcis adhuc uisu: niueo natat ignis in ore
purpureus fuluoque nitet coma gratior auro.
necdum prima noua lanugine uertitur aetas,
tranquillaequae faces oculis et plurima uultu
mater inest: qualis Lycia uenator Apollo
cum redit et saeuis permutat plectra pharetris.
forte et laetus adest—o quantum gaudia formae
adiciunt!

ACHIL. 1.159–68

Achilles was there, greater because of much sweat and dust and, although among arms and hastened toils, he was still sweet to behold. Crimson fire swims on his snow-white face and his hair shines, more pleasant than yellow gold. Not yet is his young age transformed with a new beard, and calm lights are in his eyes. There is much of his mother in his face: like the hunter Apollo when he returns from Lycia and trades his harsh quivers for the plectrum. It happens that he is joyful. O how much does joy add to beauty!

In this description we are first given a general impression of Achilles' appearance and his size (159–61). Then we are told specific details about his complexion, his hair, his beard, and his eyes (161–5). Finally, Statius provides a simile that compares Achilles to Apollo (165–8). Visual language is prominent. Achilles is "sweet to behold" (*dulcis adhuc uisu*, 161) and there is frequent reference to colors: Achilles' skin is like snow (*niueo*, 161) with a fiery blush (*ignis* . . . / *purpureus*, 161–2); his hair is like gold (*fuluo* . . . *auro*, 162). In addition there are some daring metaphors that pertain to Achilles' appearance. First is the idea of fire "swimming" in snow (*niueo natat ignis*, 161). Second is the oxymoronic phrase *tranquillaequae faces oculis* (literally, "tranquil torches are in his eyes").⁶

5 Cf. Duncan (1913) 89–94; Fantham (2003) 119; Feeney (2004) 88–93; Heslin (2005) 181–4; Sanna (2008) 204–5; Davis, pp. 165–6 and McNelis, pp. 190–2 in this volume.

6 Oxymoron: Statius' metaphorical or metonymic use of *fax* usually denotes something negative and/or violent. E.g., *Achil.* 1.304 (unpleasant aspects of desire), 1.33 (the fateful marriage

Finally there are at least seven descriptive allusions, which will be analyzed below.⁷

Metapoetry

Achilles' strenuous physical activity makes him look less like a boy and more like man. Hence the word *maior* means either "older" or "bigger." Achilles' ambiguous appearance is further emphasized by the fact that he is presented as armed yet, in spite of this, pleasant to look at. I propose that Statius invites us to understand these lines as a metapoetic metaphor. Achilles looks "greater" (*maior*) because of the poetic effort Statius has put into describing him; the fact that he is "pleasant to look upon" is related to a certain generic liminality in the manner of his description. In other words, Statius imbues his descriptive terminology in these first two lines with a metapoetical dimension.⁸ This may be clearly seen by comparing the terminology here with that of the proem to the *Achilleid* and by looking at how Statius characterizes the act of writing poetry elsewhere.

The *Achilleid* opens with praise of the emperor (1.14–19)⁹ and Statius engages in an elaborate *recusatio* as to why he has not yet produced a poem on Domitian. In describing the writing of the *Achilleid* Statius employs the phrase "sweat a while in the dust" (*sudare parumper / puluere*, 1.17–18), an obvious metapoetic metaphor.¹⁰ If we apply this sense of sweat and dust to the description of Achilles (1.159), we may read it as saying that Achilles is "a greater poetic creation because of the poet's 'sweat and dust.'" Indeed Achilles himself seems to confirm this sort of interpretation later in the poem when he describes his own poetic activity to Ulysses and Diomedes in similar terms (2.154–8):

of Helen and Paris, cf. *Theb.* 4.6). Cf. especially the eyes of the serpent that kills Archemorus (*liuida fax oculis*, *Theb.* 5.508).

7 On the allusions see Fantham (2003) 119; Feeney (2004) 88–93; Heslin (2005) 181–4. On the Achilles-Apollo comparison, see Heslin (2005) 94.

8 Cf. Fantham (1999a) 61, 65.

9 See Dewar (1994) 205–6; Pollmann (2001) 12 and n. 12.

10 Cf. *Theb.* 2.273–6: *hoc, docti quamquam maiora, laborant / Cyclopes, notique operum Telchines amica / certatim iuuere manu; sed plurimus ipsi / sudor* ("at this do the Cyclopes toil though they are learned in greater arts; the skillful Telchines lend a hand in friendly rivalry; but the greatest 'sweat' is his own"). The inevitably metapoetic word *doctus* and the reference to the Telchines (see Callim. *Aet.* frag. 1) suggest that Vulcan's *sudor* is metapoetic. Cf. McNelis (2007) 50–75 and Lovatt (2002) 84–5. On the sweat and dust *topos* in Statius, see Sanna (2008).

Achilles says that reciting poetry for Chiron caused just as much “sweat” (*sudor*) as actual physical toil. According to the figurative rhetoric implied by the repeated use of the “sweat and dust” *topos*, Achilles’ appearance, and the aesthetics thereof, are linked to the act of writing poetry.

The metapoetic analysis of the description of Achilles can be taken further. The literal interpretation of *et tamen arma inter festinatosque labores / dulcis adhuc uisu* (1.160–1) is that Achilles carries weapons and that, true to his Homeric epithet of “swift-footed,” he has been involved in swift and hurried tasks. Given the metapoetic rhetoric detectable in our passage, however, I suggest a figurative translation: “between epic and occasional poetry.” The argument for this reading involves figurative interpretations of the word *arma* and of the phrase *festinatos labores*. Regarding the first, Hinds has shown that since the *Aeneid* the word *arma* had become in Roman poetry a metaphor for the epic genre.¹¹ Hinds points to numerous examples of metaphorical use of the word *arma* both in Roman epic and elsewhere. Similarly, I take the phrase *festinatos labores* (“hastened labors”) to be a metaphor for occasional poetry (like Statius’ own *Silvae*). First, the idea of haste. Vessey has pointed out that Statius indulges in the conceit that his *Silvae* were “written in haste.”¹² The preface to book 1 of the *Silvae* discusses the manner in which the poems were composed: the phrase *quadam festinandi uoluptate* (“in a certain pleasure of hastening,” *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 3–4) is used to describe the speed with which the poems were written. This receives further elaboration when Statius deploys the phrase *gratiam celeritatis* (literally, “commendation of speed,” 1 *praef.* 13–14) of the poems, and when he recounts how little time it took to write each poem. Likewise, the preface to book 2 mentions the hasty composition of one of the *Silvae*, employing again the key words *festinanter* (“hastily,” 2 *praef.* 9) and *celeritatem* (“speed,” 2 *praef.* 10). Since the concept of haste is programmatic in and for the *Silvae*, I contend that the “hasty” part of the phrase *festinatos labores* in the description of Achilles has a metapoetic dimension.

Throughout the *Silvae* Statius uses the word *labor* of the process of poetic creation, especially in connection with the composition of the *Thebaid*.¹³ At three points in the *Silvae* Statius refers to the *Thebaid* with the word *labor* or one of its cognates (*Silv.* 3.2.142–3, 3.5.35–6, 4.4.87–9). At another point Statius contrasts epic “labor” (*heroos . . . labores*, *Silv.* 4.7.2) with more humble genres of poetry (*minores . . . / . . . gyros*, 4.7.3–4). Given this metapoetical use of the ideas of haste and labor in the *Silvae*, I submit that the phrase *festinatos*

11 Hinds (1992) 91–3, 107–11, (2000) 223–36. Cf. Hardie (1993) 101.

12 Vessey (1986b) 2754–65; cf. van Dam (1984) 4 and n. 43; Rosati, pp. 54–5, 62 in this volume.

13 Cf. Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.224–5, *Carm.* 4.2.31–2; Lucr. 1.141; Ov. *Tr.* 5.12.64.

labores in the *Achilleid* may also be interpreted metapoetically, meaning something like “the hasty form of poetry like the *Silvae*.” Thus Achilles is said to be “between epic poetry (*arma*) and hasty occasional poetry (*festinatos labores*).”¹⁴ Achilles’ appearance, in other words, evinces a kind of poetic hybridity, neither completely epic nor completely occasional. Couple this interpretation with the metapoetic sweat and dust that occurs in the first line of the description, and we obtain an altogether different understanding of the “description” of Achilles than the “literal” first reading would suggest. Statius has mingled language that describes the hero’s appearance with language that evokes the composition of poetry and the comparison of poetic genres. Therefore we are invited to understand the visual aspects of Achilles’ appearance metapoetically and vice versa.

Metapoetry and Vision

Why does Statius combine visual description with metapoetic metaphors? One answer is that Statius wants us to consider the relationship between image and narrative. The issue of the relationship between vision and text is of course a perennial one found, for example, in Greek rhetorical theory in the concept of *enargeia* or narrative vividness.¹⁵ It is also found in modern theories of *ekphrasis* that try to account for the ways in which verbal and visual media interact. In our passage, Statius makes us think about the relationship between image and text by combining visual and metapoetic rhetoric. We saw that Achilles was “greater” in terms of both visual and metapoetic aesthetics. We also saw that he was “still a delight to behold” in spite of his liminal status both as a boy verging on manhood and as a figure appropriate to multiple poetic genres. Given the metapoetic dimension of our description, we can ask: what is the act of looking at Achilles actually like? What and how do we “see” in this passage?

To answer these questions we may start with an allusion:

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- 14 Cf. Hinds (2000) 236–44 and Barchiesi (2005) 53. Cf. Sanna (2004) on Parthenopaeus in the *Thebaid*.
 - 15 See esp. Theon, *Progymnasmata* 2.118.7–119.29 Spengel. On *enargeia* and *ekphrasis* in the *progymnasmata*, see Friedländer (1912) 83–6; Zanker (1981); Graf (1995) 143–9; Dubel (1997) 252–9; Scholz (1998); Webb (1999) 11–15; Elsner (2002) 1–3. On the visual qualities of ekphrastic language, see Elsner (2004) 157–8. See also the special editions of *Classical Philology* (2007) and *Ramus* (2002) on *ekphrasis*.

τὸν μὲν Ἀθηναίῃ θῆκεν, Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα,
 μείζονά τ' εἰσιδέειν καὶ πάσσονα, καὶ δὲ κάρητος
 οὖλας ἦκε κόμας, ὑακινθίνῳ ἄνθει ὁμοίας.

HOM. OD. 6.229–31

Athena, daughter of Zeus made him larger to see and broader, and she dressed the curly hair on his head, like to hyacinth blooms.

Here Odysseus, who has washed up naked on the beach on Scheria, is being transformed by Athena to look more attractive. Statius' description of Achilles owes much to this passage. The phrase θῆκεν . . . / μείζονά τ' εἰσιδέειν ("she made him larger to see," 6.229–30) corresponds to the opening lines of our description. The connection is the *topos* that equates increased size with visual attractiveness: Odysseus is made "larger to see"; Achilles is "greater" and "sweet to behold." Statius has not only appropriated the well-worn idea of making the hero appear even more beautiful than he is, but he has thematized this idea within a metapoetic context. Statius replaces the goddess with the poet: it is not Athena but the metapoetic sweat and dust that make Achilles appear greater. The poet has performed an epic action, that is, he has made Achilles look bigger. This epic action is itself subject to generic modification. For in visual terms, the hero is "sweet to behold"; *dulcis*, as Davis discusses in this volume, belongs to the erotic elegiac lexicon.¹⁶ In other words, Statius has employed the language of visual aesthetics to comment upon the act of poetic composition and generic selection. Words such as *maior* and *dulcis* that at first appear to establish a visual evaluation turn out to have significance for aesthetic judgments on poetry.

Follow the Blush

I now explore how Statius' description of Achilles plays upon this juxtaposition of vision and narrative. I focus on the intra- and intertextual implications of Achilles' blush. Recall that Statius presents a striking metaphor describing Achilles' blushing complexion: *niueo natat ignis in ore / purpureus* ("crimson fire swims on his snow-white face," *Achil.* 1.161–2). Notice the strong contrasts between white and red colors and between the substances of snow and fire. These visual contrasts bespeak the liminal status of Achilles' appearance between boyhood and manhood as well as his liminal generic status between

16 See Morales (2004) 8–11, 29–35; Davis, pp. 169–70 in this volume.

epic and elegiac and occasional verse. Achilles' complexion is a visual metaphor for his portrayal as a figure appropriate to both kinds of poetry. Achilles' gender transformations (boy to girl to man) in the *Achilleid* evoke poetic-generic shifts (comparable to a shift from pastoral to elegy to epic); allusions in the description of the blush reinforce this conclusion.

After the episode in Chiron's cave Thetis takes Achilles to the island of Scyros. She does this to implement her plan of keeping Achilles out of the Trojan War, that is, to dress him up like a girl and to entrust him to King Lycomedes of Scyros. Achilles resists the cross-dressing scheme, citing shame, until he sees Deidamia, Lycomedes' daughter (*Achil.* 1.301–10). His blush (*lucemque genarum*, 305) reappears along with metapoetic sweat (*sudore*, 306). Additionally, two similes (milk and blood; ivory and red dye, 307–8) describe the alternating colors of his face (*palletque rubetque*, "he grows pale and blushes," 310). Consider the context here: Achilles is torn. On the one hand he feels a sense of shame at donning women's clothes, a sense of shame that derives from going against what he takes to be the point of Chiron's training. Thetis herself articulates this last point (1.274) and thus connects this passage with the initial description of Achilles. On the other hand Achilles greatly desires Deidamia, as the description of the physical effects on him of seeing her emphasizes. His internal conflict is visible in his face and in the two colors we "see" there. The description of the (negative) physical effects of desire (Achilles' inability to move, the flame in his marrow, his blush) is the hallmark of Greek and Roman love poetry since Homer and the lyric poets.¹⁷ Before, in Chiron's cave, Achilles "appeared" between genres. On Scyros he becomes further implicated in this generic conflict and cannot decide whether to be an epic hero or an elegiac/pastoral lover.¹⁸ Moreover, the metapoetic sweat here underlines the passage's engagement with generic considerations. As noted, it is the memory of Chiron's training that keeps Achilles from wholly embracing his new role. Description of appearance evinces generic conflict, this time actuated within narrative.

Let us trace Achilles' blush further. While Achilles cavorts with the Scyrian maidens (and has a love affair with Deidamia), the Greek army assembles at Aulis. There the army's need for Achilles is revealed. Ulysses and Diomedes are sent to retrieve him. Ulysses uses gifts to lure out the hidden Achilles: amongst the baubles for girls are weapons (again: *arma*, *Achil.* 1.851) meant for Achilles. Achilles' reaction to seeing the weapons (852–66) establishes a new desire (desire for military glory) in Achilles (857), and this desire

17 Cyrino (1995). For Statius' Achilles as an erotic figure, see Cyrino (1998) 233–4.

18 Sanna (2007) argues that Statius' Achilles is an Ovidian lover who follows the precepts of the *Ars Amatoria*.

manifests itself again in his appearance (his face is changed, his hair stands on end, 855–6). Achilles then sees himself reflected on the shield, which causes him to blush (864–6). Notice that the (metapoetic) *arma* themselves contain Achilles' changed appearance in the form of his reflection. Achilles appears on the shield along with inscribed images of battles (*orbem / caelatum pugnas*, 852–3): he has visually been “written into” an epic context.¹⁹ Achilles' blush is no longer the blush of a pretty young boy, nor that of an amorous lover. It is the blush of an excited (potential) warrior. The passage contrasts Achilles' abandonment of love with his desire to go to Troy (857), emphasizing the hero's change from lover to fighter. Once again the hero has embodied a thematic and generic shift that becomes apparent in the language used to describe his appearance. To underline this further Statius incorporates a lion simile (858–63) into the description. Lion similes are the hallmark of the epic hero,²⁰ and this lion itself undergoes a transformation from a domesticated animal to a wild beast.

Statius visually emphasizes the generic transformation of Achilles into an epic hero at three other points in the poem. One occurs when Ulysses tells Achilles the history behind the Trojan war. Ulysses cleverly suggests that Deidamia could just as easily have been abducted as Helen, whereupon Achilles reacts by grabbing his sword and blushing (*ingens / inpulit ora rubor*, “a huge blush struck his face,” *Achil.* 2.84–5), this time in a fit of anger. Obviously this reinforces the shift we saw at the end of book 1 when Achilles sees the arms set out by Ulysses. This scene also looks forward to the (unwritten) Iliadic part of the narrative where Achilles can even become angry with his compatriots. Achilles' blush here is a prelude to actual violence, and signals his complete transformation into an epic hero.²¹

A second passage that connects Achilles' appearance with the issue of genre occurs when Achilles first takes up the weapons offered by Ulysses (*Achil.* 1.878–85). There we are told in highly visual terms that Achilles appears to grow, that the weapons are too small for his hands, and that he seems now bigger than Ulysses and Diomedes (878–80). Additionally the visual appearance of the arms (*arma* again) throws the whole palace into confusion (880–1). If we read these *arma* metapoetically too, we understand again a generic shift based on the appearance of the hero and the disappearance of the ersatz girl. As in the initial description, Achilles appears bigger as a result of metapoetical intervention, an intervention marked in this instance by epic metaphors. The

19 Cf. Barchiesi (2005) 63.

20 Lonsdale (1990) 1, 39–47.

21 On the connection between this and the Chiron episode, see Fantham (2003) 119–22.

metapoetic *arma* enhance Achilles' visual impact on viewers, and transform a peaceful scene into one of virtual battle, as though Achilles were engaged in the final duel with Hector (883).

A final connection between Achilles' appearance and the question of genre occurs when Achilles is about to leave Scyros (*Achil.* 2.5–11). Achilles appears "changed in their sight" (*uisu* / *mutatus*, 9–10) and is seen by others as "remarkable because of the arms" (*insignemque ipsis . . . armis* / *Aeaciden . . . / prospectant cuncti*, 6–8). Notice that the hero's appearance induces the viewer (and reader) to perform a bit of narrative surgery: Achilles' appearance is such that it seems as though the Scyrian episode had never happened and that he came direct from Chiron's cave to join the expedition (*ceu numquam Scyria passus* / *litora Peliacoque rates escendat ab antro*, 10–11).²² Achilles himself will echo this excision at the end of the poem (as we have it) when he recounts to Ulysses and Diomedes his training under Chiron but refuses to recount the Scyrian episode, saying "my mother knows the rest" (*scit cetera mater*, 2.167). Chiron, at the beginning of the Scyrian episode, had already become for Achilles a symbol of his martial self (as opposed to the gender-bending self he was about to become on Scyros). But of course the Scyrian episode cannot be fully elided, and even in Chiron's cave we saw Achilles as between genres and, as an intertextual analysis will show, between genders.

Throughout the *Achilleid* Statius uses Achilles' appearance as a vehicle to comment on the generic status of both the hero and of the poem itself. Visual aesthetics are thus transferred to the realm of literary language and, conversely, vision itself is constituted in metaliterary terms. We may observe Achilles' shifting generic status by "looking" at him, and by employing criteria of judgment derived from these acts of viewing. Thus in the initial description Achilles is "greater" in both a visual and metapoetic sense. On the other hand, the act of viewing is itself conditioned by literary and metaliterary considerations. We have seen how Achilles' blush may be construed in different ways depending upon the generic markers within the surrounding context.

Intertexts

Let us now turn to Achilles' blush as an intertextual gesture. I will examine intertexts with Moschus, pseudo-Bion, pseudo-Tibullus, Vergil, and Propertius. In all these instances Statius appropriates visual language from these writers in

22 Hinds (2000) 241.

order to reinforce the genre discourse, outlined above, implicit in his description of Achilles.

Recall the language Statius uses to describe Achilles' blush: *niueo natat ignis in ore / purpureus* ("crimson fire swims on his snow-white face," *Achil.* 1.161–2). A fragment of pseudo-Bion describes Achilles' courtship of Deidamia in very similar terms: καὶ γὰρ ἴσον τήναις θηλύνετο, καὶ τόσον ἄνθος / χιονέαις πόρφυρε παρηΐσι ("for truly he seemed a woman, like to them and, like them, a bloom was crimson on his snowy face," 2.18–19). Statius is obviously borrowing the crimson / white contrast here. The crucial difference between the two texts is the fact that Statius places his description of Achilles *before* his narration of the Scyrian episode, whereas pseudo-Bion's shepherds locate it during that episode. Statius' appropriation of the erotic Achilles is thus proleptic, and therefore underlines the generic contrast evident in his appearance. The epic Achilles, characterized by *arma* and his "greater" (*maior*) size, also anticipates the erotic elements of his personality and his girlish appearance that come out in the later Scyrian episode.

Statius' description of the colors of Achilles' face also recalls another pastoral poet, Moschus. In his poem on "the runaway Eros" we have a description by his mother of the errant god: χρῶτα μὲν οὐ λευκὸς πυρὶ δ' εἵκελος· ὄμματα δ' αὐτῷ / δριμύλα καὶ φλογέεντα ("his skin is not white but like to fire; his eyes are keen and fiery," 1.7–8). Although Moschus' employment of the red-white contrast is a negative one, the lexical presence of the two colors in the company of the god's "fiery eyes" (which recall Achilles' torch-like eyes at *Achil.* 1.164) makes it likely that Statius was thinking of this passage too when he was describing Achilles. I will say more about the Moschus allusion when I discuss the reception of Statius' Achilles. For now it suffices to note that Statius has again borrowed visual language from a clearly erotic context.

Scholars have noted an allusion in Statius' description of Achilles to a poem in the third book of the Tibullan corpus.²³ There we are presented with a description of Apollo in which pseudo-Tibullus uses the phrase *color in niueo corpore purpureus* ("a crimson color in his snow-white body," [Tib.] 3.4.30). Statius of course borrows this red-white contrast. Pseudo-Tibullus also compares Apollo to a young girl (*ut... uirgo*, 31). Statius (proleptically) appropriates this comparison to anticipate Achilles' later femininity. The intertextual reader sees in Statius' description of Achilles and its allusion to the Tibullan Apollo a clever intertextual prefiguration of the hero's cross-dressing on Scyros.²⁴ Moreover, by alluding to pseudo-Tibullus' description of Apollo, Statius also antici-

23 Heslin (2005) 182–3.

24 Heslin (2005) 183.

pates his own comparison of Achilles to Apollo at the end of the description (*Achil.* 1.165–8).

The intertextual Apollo comparison, as well as the actual comparison of Achilles to Apollo, triggers another intertext (also noted by scholars),²⁵ namely a simile in *Aeneid* 4 in which Aeneas is compared to Apollo (*Aen.* 4.141–50). Statius echoes Vergil's references to Lycia and to the god's arrows.²⁶ Statius also imitates Vergil's description of Apollo's hair (*Aen.* 4.147–8) and of Aeneas' shining face (150).²⁷ Statius has thus combined the two Apollo allusions (in pseudo-Tibullus and in Vergil) in his description of Achilles, and has activated this intertext (initially) through the description of Achilles' blush. Moreover, Statius has transformed his Vergilian model. Vergil presents Apollo adorned with his quiver of arrows. Statius, on the other hand, presents Apollo as exchanging his quiver for his lyre in order to illustrate his transformation from a warrior (whose arrows are reminiscent of the vengeful Apollo depicted at *Hom. Il.* 1.43–4) to a poet. This transformation obviously has genre implications²⁸ and emphasizes Achilles' own marginal generic status in Statius. Indeed Statius is simply making explicit what his allusions imply. By juxtaposing the erotic Apollo (in pseudo-Tibullus) and the warrior Apollo (in Vergil), Statius has shown how the same elements of visual language (each model Apollo is described in similar terms) can be interpreted in different ways according to context and the presence of other visual cues. The contexts of interpretation are themselves constituted (intertextually and otherwise) in largely generic terms. Pseudo-Tibullus' Apollo has an erotic dimension because of the nature of the elegiac poem in which he appears, while Vergil's Apollo is informed, as we noted, by epic language borrowed from Homer. Statius has once again linked issues of genre with visual language.

An allusion to Propertius, where that poet explains why his girlfriend is so attractive (*Prop.* 2.3.9–22 Goold), further emphasizes this linkage. Propertius deploys contrasts between snow and red lead and between roses and milk to describe his girlfriend's overall appearance (*ut Maeotica nix minio si certet Hiberno, / utque rosae puro lacte natant folia*, “just like if northern snow were to contend with Spanish lead; just like rose petals swimming in pure milk,” 15–16). These similes are the source of Statius' metaphor according to which Achilles' blush “swims” on his snow-white face (*Achil.* 1.161–2). Propertius also compares

25 Heslin (2005) 93–4; Davis, pp. 165–6 in this volume.

26 *Achil.* 1.165–6 and *Aen.* 4.143–5, 149. The Apollo simile comes from Apollonius, cf. Heslin (2005) 95.

27 *Aen.* 4.147–8 and *Achil.* 1.163; *Aen.* 4.150 and *Achil.* 1.162–3.

28 Cf. Conte (1992) 107–8 on a similar transformation in the *Metamorphoses*.

his girlfriend's eyes to torches (*oculi, geminae, sidera nostra, faces*, "her eyes, my stars, twin torches," 2.3.12; cf. *Achil.* 1.164). More important for our purposes, however, is the fact that Propertius ends up emphasizing not so much his girlfriend's beauty as her poetic talent (she is compared with Sappho, Corinna, and Erinna, 17–22). Statius' allusion (again activated by the blush) draws on Propertius' collocation of a description of physical appearance and poetic concerns. This obviously correlates well with the way that Statius connects poetic metaphors and visual language in his description of Achilles. Likewise, Propertius metapoetically comments on the erotic content of his poem by portraying the object of his desire as a love poet herself. Statius' description of Achilles constitutes an acknowledgment of this metapoetic statement within the context of descriptive visual discourse. In Statius one "sees" metapoetic statements of genre within Achilles' appearance, whereas in Propertius we are faced with a simple juxtaposition of appearance and literary concerns.

Statius' metapoetic use of visual language is evident both within the narrative of the *Achilleid* and within the intertexts activated by the descriptive passage. The various features of Achilles' appearance are used to explore the relationship between narrative and visual culture. Statius not only narrates what is seen, but asks us to see what he narrates. The metapoetic dimension of Statius' descriptive language serves to "visualize" the literary qualities of the narrative. This in turn leads the reader to understand that the very visual qualities that define Achilles also serve to define the narrative in which he is described. Like Achilles, the *Achilleid* itself is "not-quite-epic." Moreover, narrative both enacts a kind of vision and is in turn subject to that very act of visualization. Genre defines the appearance of figures within the narrative, and is in turn "seen" within these figures' appearance. As we will see, this very Statian practice is present in the reception of the *Achilleid*.

The Reception of Statius' Achilles

The fifth-century writer Blossius Aemilius Dracontius of Carthage was an avid reader of Statius²⁹ and wrote, among other things, a series of hexameter poems entitled *Romulea*. In poem 2 Dracontius narrates the abduction of Hylas. At the beginning of the poem Venus begs her son Cupid to inflict painful desire upon a group of nymphs who have offended her. Venus instructs her son to induce the nymphs to fall violently in love with Hylas, companion of Hercules.

29 Pavlovskis (1965a) 293–4, (1965b) 174–6; Bright (1987) 216; Moussy (1989).

She then describes the young man in a way that imitates Statius' description of Achilles:

Alcidis comes est comis puerilibus annis,
quem rubor ut roseus sic candor lacteus ornat;
illi purpureus niueo natat ignis in ore.

DRACONT. ROM. 2.65–7

He is the companion of Hercules, affable in his youthful years, whom both a rosy blush and a milky gleam adorn; a crimson fire swims on his snowy face.

The metaphor of “swimming fire” clearly derives from Statius and indicates Dracontius' indebtedness to our poet. What is even more striking, however, is how Dracontius reads Statius' Achilles within a broader context. Recall that Statius appears to be alluding to Moschus' “runaway Eros.” Dracontius too appears to have Moschus' pastoral context in mind when structuring his own poem.³⁰ The situation at the opening of Dracontius' piece closely resembles the opening of Moschus' poem: Dracontius has Venus describing Hylas to Cupid just as Moschus has Aphrodite describing the missing Eros himself. All three poets, moreover, employ the red-white contrast. Dracontius has thus read Statius' description back into the erotic context that Statius is himself borrowing. Dracontius understands that the way Statius describes Achilles is meant to be understood as deriving from a particular generic context, and hence is reading Statius' descriptive language metapoetically.

My second, and more complex, example of the reception of Statius' Achilles is Philostratus' *Heroicus*.³¹ It would be well-nigh impossible to prove that Philostratus ever read Statius, and I make no attempt to do so here. I merely suggest that there are enough intriguing parallels between the two writers to merit investigation. Philostratus, in employing descriptive language that at many points seems to recall Statius' description, is also extremely interested in issues of genre. The *Heroicus* is a dialogue on the heroes of the Trojan war and involves a conversation between a Phoenician merchant stranded in Thrace and a local vine-tender. The vine-tender professes to have contact and

30 As well as Statius' *Silvae*. See Pavlovskis (1965b) 174. Dracontius probably knew Greek literature: cf. Bright (1987) 24–5 (on the *Hylas*) and 217–18 (generally).

31 On the *Heroicus* in general, see Anderson (1986) 241–57; Billault (2000) 126–38; Jones (2001); Aitken and MacLean (2004); Kim (2010) 175–215. Text of the *Heroicus* used: Berenson and Aitken (2001).

conversation with the heroes, who tell him the true versions of their stories (these versions are frequently at variance with what Homer says). Several heroes figure prominently, but it is an account of Achilles that dominates the late sections of the dialogue.

Before proceeding, it is important to point out that Philostratus' vine-tender explicitly rejects the Scyrian episode as false (*Her.* 45.8). Philostratus thus goes against a very strong literary and visual artistic tradition in the Roman world. Statius' own contribution in narrating the Scyrian episode was but a part of a larger appreciation for the story in Roman culture.³² In spite of his rejection of the Scyrian story, Philostratus nevertheless retains many erotic features in his presentation not only of Achilles but also of several of the other heroes he describes. In many ways Philostratus too is engaged in a conflation of visual and metaliterary forms of language.

Philostratus describes Achilles first as a youth, fresh from Chiron's tutelage (*Her.* 45.5) and then, a bit later, as he currently appears (48.2–4). One striking parallel between Philostratus' description and that of Statius is, as commentators have noticed, the way Achilles' hair is depicted.³³ Philostratus' formulation τὴν μὲν δὴ κόμην ἀμφιλαφῇ αὐτῷ φησιν εἶναι καὶ χρυσοῦ ἡδίω (“[he says] his hair is thick, sweeter than gold,” 48.2) closely resembles Statius: *fuluoque nitet coma gratior auro* (“his hair shines, more pleasant than yellow gold,” *Achil.* 1.162). The comparison of Achilles' hair to gold in both writers, coupled with the insistence on the pleasure produced by seeing his hair, is of course not enough to prove that Philostratus read Statius, but it remains a close parallel. Moreover, like Statius, Philostratus emphasizes the gleam of Achilles' eyes (48.2) and describes the visual effect of the hero's complexion (his face emits a gleam as well, 45.5). Other heroes in the dialogue also possess features that recall Statius' Achilles.³⁴ Overall, Achilles' appearance causes pleasure in viewers: “and he seems sweeter to those who love/desire him” (τοῖς τε ἐρώσιν ἡδίω αὐτὸν φαίνεσθαι, *Her.* 48.2). This connection of pleasure and sight of course resembles Statius' claim that Achilles' is “still sweet to behold” (*dulcis adhuc uisu*, *Achil.* 1.161). But most striking of all is the following passage:

32 Pavlovskis (1965b) 281 and n. 2; Barchiesi (2005) 47 and n. 2; Cameron (2009) 5–11.

33 Kürschner, cited in Dilke (1954) 96, and Morgan (1997) 212 n. 20 (in both the citation should be *Her.* 19.5 instead of 48.2). See Morgan (1997) 211–12 on Achilles' hair in the literary and material record.

34 *Her.* 10.2 (Protesilaus shows the incipient beard) and 42.3 (Euphorbus compared to a statue of Apollo).

ὑπερφυῆς δὲ τὸ σῶμα ἐφαίνετο, αὐξηθεὶς τε ῥᾶον ἢ τὰ πρὸς ταῖς πηγαῖς δένδρα,
πολὺς μὲν ἐν συμποσίοις ᾗδετο, πολὺς δὲ ἐν σπουδαίς.

PHILOSTR. *HER.* 45.5

And his body appeared larger than natural and, having grown more easily than trees next to springs, he was sung of much in symposia and in serious gatherings (?).

Notice the connection here between Achilles' size, emphasized by the comparison to a young tree, and the act of singing (ᾗδετο) in different modes (at symposia and "in serious gatherings"). Regardless of how we interpret these two types of poetic performance, it is clear that as a visual effect (note the verb ἐφαίνετο) Achilles' size inspires people to compose (at least) two kinds of song. Recall how Statius uses Achilles' size, itself enhanced by the metapoetic *topos* of sweat and dust, to emphasize Achilles' intergeneric status. This meta-poeticism accords well with Philostratus' fascination with the metaliterary relationship between Homer and Achilles. At one point the vine-tender compares Achilles and Homer (*Her.* 45.7). Throughout the dialogue, Philostratus dwells on Achilles' poetic talents. The vine-tender emphasizes his facility in singing (45.6) and indeed actually quotes one of his songs (55.3). More importantly, however, is the vine-tender's description of the songs that Achilles and Helen sing together on the "White Island" (54.12–13). Among other things, they sing the poems of Homer and poems about Homer himself! All of this points to Philostratus' interest in the relationship between the poet and his subject, and how in the case of Achilles this relationship may be reversed. Put simply, Achilles is both the subject of song and its creator.³⁵ Hence he is by definition a metapoetic figure in the dialogue, a fact that is emphasized in Philostratus' claim that the hero's appearance inspires different kinds of poetry.

On the basis of these two examples I suggest that Statius' mingling of visual and metapoetic language had a lasting influence on the literary tradition of Achilles' career. The case of Philostratus is especially telling in this respect. Although the vine-tender rejects the Scyrian episode as spurious, Philostratus seems to maintain Statius' conflation of visual and generic issues. The erotic aspects of Achilles' generic status, established in Statius' Scyrian episode, are translated by Philostratus into the portrayal of the hero's afterlife.

35 Statius also emphasizes Achilles' abilities as a poet: see, e.g., *Achil.* 1.184–94 (Achilles performing epic songs). Cf. Heslin (2005) 86–93.

Conclusion

Statius' description of Achilles at the beginning of the *Achilleid*, and the subsequent appearances of the hero throughout the poem, employ visual language to explore issues of genre. This metapoetic Achilles, accessed through visual description, is evidently an innovation, as Dracontius attests. Statius' descriptive technique itself—the mapping of the issues of seeing and of reading onto one another—provides a way of reading the poem(s) in which the technique occurs. By interweaving the questions of “what is seen?” and “how is it read?” Statius has provided his audience with a new aesthetic criterion both for his unusual poem and for the various genres that his poem combines. In this sense, the *Achilleid* both comments on its own unusual generic status and presents a reading of the generic traditions of which it partakes. The *Achilleid* is “not-quite-epic,” and hence the visual aesthetic standards applied to its hero reflect this generic liminality: Achilles' blush is both the blush of a lover and a warrior. Statius has constructed a visual-poetic “gaze” that assimilates narrative and perception into what amounts to the same phenomenal category. That is, Statius makes “reading” and “seeing” one and the same thing by allowing us to “see” narrative and “read” images. This assimilation could be a response to the epideictic challenge found in the rhetoricians whereby the ekphrastic text “almost” makes visual that which is being talked about (Theon, *Progymnasmata* 2.119.27–9 Spengel). On the other hand, Statius' gaze could also be the result of the interpenetration of modes of interpreting the sister arts; it could suggest that the implied audience of the *Achilleid* was just as visually literate as it was capable of grasping arcane allusions.³⁶ Visual cues in plastic art are informed by literary treatments of the subject matter while at the same time literary texts borrow these very visual cues in order to create specific textual effects, for example, Statius' generic play based on visual signals. In the end, Statius has accomplished a powerful integration of visual and narrative aesthetics that effectively emphasizes the play of genres in the *Achilleid*.

36 See Chinn (2005) on the conflict between visual and verbal arts in the *Silvae*.

Similes and Gender in the *Achilleid*

Charles McNelis

The *Achilleid* represents gender as something both innate to an individual and constructed for that individual through social norms and acculturation.¹ Achilles, for example, delivers a soliloquy in which he laments that he compromises his masculinity by repressing his desire to have sex with Deidamia (1.624–39). He then decides to rape her and thus “prove” his masculinity. According to Achilles’ logic, the act of penetration, in this case dependent upon his biological status as a male, determines his masculinity. However, after the rape, Achilles continues to dress and act like a girl for months, and he does so successfully because he had been taught the proper movements, actions, and dress of a woman (e.g., 1.325–31, 580–3). Achilles’ mastery of culturally constructed symbols of femininity thus balances his biologically determined masculinity.

Some dimensions of the poem’s handling of gender reflect Roman *Realien* and attitudes, but the *Achilleid* also constructs its approach to gender by drawing upon the literary past. The Homeric Achilles casts the largest shadow over Statius’ character, but a multitude of other literary figures also form a significant backdrop for Achilles. In this chapter, I argue that the first two similes of the *Achilleid* both anticipate and outline the treatment of Achilles’ gender throughout the poem.² Statius’ opening simile (1.165–6) recalls the Vergilian simile that likens Aeneas to Apollo (*Aen.* 4.143–50). Statius, however, moves in a slightly different direction than the Vergilian simile in that he highlights Achilles’ ephebic and liminal status. The second simile also highlights Achilles’ ephebic nature by comparing him to Castor (*Achil.* 1.180–1). In this sense, the two similes, located in close compass, reinforce one another and emphasize their common theme.³ At the same time, the second simile draws upon a deep nexus of poetic comparisons from Catullus, Vergil, Ovid, Propertius, and Callimachus. In particular, Statius draws upon Callimachus’ Athena as a model

1 Heslin (2005) 294–5.

2 For the programmatic importance of the initial simile in the *Achilleid*, see Feeney (2004) 89–91. Hunter (2006) 83–5 and Hardie (1998) 92 discuss the programmatic role of opening similes in, respectively, the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*.

3 For the emphatic force of proximate similes, see Serv. *ad Aen.* 12.923; Nünlist (2009) 293.

for masculinity and martial excellence combined with feminine attributes. Moreover, Statius elsewhere introduces Minerva at moments in the narrative that are crucial for the poem's treatment of gender. In this allusive manner, Statius' simile establishes a programmatic template for Achilles and broader dynamics of the poem.

The Opening Simile

The first simile caps Achilles' entry into the poem shortly after Thetis has arrived at Chiron's cave and wants to hide her son:

ille aderat multo sudore et puluere maior,
et tamen arma inter festinatosque labores
dulcis adhuc uisu: niueo natat ignis in ore
purpureus fuluoque nitet coma gratior auro.
necdum prima noua lanugine uertitur aetas,
tranquillaequae faces oculis et plurima uultu
mater inest, qualis Lycia uenator Apollo
cum redit et saeuis permutat plectra pharetris.

ACHIL. 1.159–66

He was present, older, and with a lot of sweat and dust, but nevertheless amidst weapons and his hastened labors, he was still sweet to look upon. A purple flame swam on his snowy face, and his hair glistened more attractively than yellow gold. His early age was not yet changing with a sprouting beard, and the torches in his eyes were calm, and his face was very much like his mother, such as when the hunter Apollo returns from Lycia and exchanges his fierce arrows for the lyre quill.

At the most obvious level, Achilles has just returned from the hunt and thus Statius exploits Apollo's association with the hunt (e.g., Xen. *Cyn.* 1.1). Moreover, the simile exploits the treatment of Achilles and Apollo as near equivalents,⁴ and in this particular context, Apollo's ephebic and ever youthful attributes are relevant (e.g., Callim. *Hymn* 2.36).⁵ After all, Thetis' child is described in terms that recall Statius' own description of Parthenopaeus (*ipso sudore et*

4 Nagy (1979) 143–4; Clay (1983) 181.

5 Graf (2008) 103–4.

puluere, “with sweat and dust,” *Theb.* 9.710; *tunc dulce comae radiisque trementes* / *dulce nitent uisus*, “then his hair and eyes shone sweetly as they shimmered in the sun,” 701–2), a youthful warrior whose name means “girl-face” and thus exemplifies sexual ambiguity. Although Achilles’ name does not reflect that same kind of play with gender, the passage in the *Achilleid* concludes by offering that Achilles’ face is feminine (*plurima uultu* / *mater inest*, “his face was very much like his mother,” 1.164–5), and in that sense he possesses the feminine attributes embedded within Parthenopaeus’ name. Achilles also possesses the white skin (1.161) that typically accompanies sensual and youthful beauty.⁶ Indeed, the combination of *niueus* and *purpureus* specifically evoke the glow of ephebic youth (e.g., *Silv.* 1.2.244–5, *Verg. Aen.* 12.65–9). *Ignis* (*Achil.* 1.161) often refers to the fiery radiance in the faces of attractive youths (e.g., *Ov. Met.* 1.498, *Sen. Phaed.* 1269). Like his Homeric incarnation (*Il.* 1.197) Statius’ Achilles has blonde hair (*Achil.* 1.162), but the language evokes the Vergilian simile concerning the head of the youthful Ascanius (*caput, ecce, puer detectus honestum* / *qualis gemma micat fuluum quae diuidit aurum*, “look: the boy with his noble head uncovered, sparkling like a jewel that bisects yellow gold,” *Aen.* 10.133–4). Finally, the lack of a beard (*lanugo*) indicates that Achilles has not reached manhood. For all of the emphasis upon Achilles’ ephebic attributes at this moment in the narrative, however, Apollo ultimately serves as a foil for Achilles’ entire life. After all, Achilles will not be an eternal youth. To the contrary, he will be killed by the god,⁷ and thus the distinction between human and mortal—central to the *Achilleid* as a whole—will be affirmed by this contrast of Apollo and Achilles.⁸ Nonetheless, at this early moment in Achilles’ life, the link to Apollo enhances the description of Achilles’ youthful beauty and liminal sexual status.

Statius’ simile gains additional force when read against the backdrop of a Vergilian simile involving Aeneas and Apollo:

qualis ubi hibernam Lyciam Xanthique fluenta
deserit ac Delum maternam inuisit Apollo . . .

VERG. *AEN.* 4.143–4

Such as when Apollo leaves wintry Lycia and the flow of the Xanthus and visits maternal Delos . . .

6 Lyne (1978) *ad Ciris* 170.

7 Feeney (2004) 89.

8 McNelis (2009).

At the level of diction, Statius echoes Vergil's *qualis* and his mention of Apollo's association with Lycia. Thematically, Statius also alludes to the content of the Vergilian simile in the sense that Apollo leaves Lycia and returns to his maternal birthplace at Delos, and Achilles returns to his mother. Moreover, in each simile, the mention of their mothers recalls the fact that Achilles and Apollo may be defined by their mothers. Apollo, for instance, is often designated as the child or offspring of Leto,⁹ and Achilles may be called the "son of Thetis" (e.g., Eur. *IA* 896). Even in the *Iliad*, where Achilles is always pointedly designated through his patronymic, he has an extremely close relationship with Thetis that emphasizes his position as a child (e.g., *Il.* 1.362, 1.414, 18.73). These depictions of mother-child relationships help to reinforce that Achilles and Apollo are youths.

In reworking the Vergilian Apollo for his own simile, Statius also generates a comparison between Achilles and Aeneas. That is, Apollo, an element common to both similes, serves as a bridge between Aeneas and Achilles and thus creates a triangulated relationship among them. One obvious similarity between Aeneas and Achilles is that they are both involved in hunting: Achilles has just returned from the hunt, and indeed still carries the cubs of a lion that he has just killed (*Achil.* 1.168–70). In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is headed to hunt, though that expedition will never lead to the capture of an animal (*Aen.* 4.151–9). Statius, then, inverts the Vergilian handling of the hunt. Moreover, as will be seen, the similes in each poem are paired with a second one within their respective narratives, but in the *Achilleid*, the Apollo-simile comes first, whereas in the *Aeneid* the Apollo-simile comes second. In this regard, Statius' order of similes within the narrative structurally inverts the Vergilian arrangement.¹⁰ These reversals reveal that Statius' Achilles does not perfectly correspond to Vergil's Aeneas. Indeed, from a broader perspective, Aeneas is an epic man (*uirum*, *Aen.* 1.1), whereas Statius focuses on Achilles' youth (*iuiuenem*, *Achil.* 1.7). In this respect, the eternally youthful Apollo works well in the *Achilleid*, whereas the point in the simile in the *Aeneid* is to establish the beauty of the god and Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.159–60). Statius' rewriting (and repositioning) of the simile fits his context.

Entering the Same River

Statius' second simile occurs after Achilles washes away the dusty residue of the hunt and emerges as an even more youthful hero:

9 Calame (2001) 110 n. 66.

10 Feeney (2004) 90.

Eurotae qualis uada Castor anhelo
intrat equo fessumque sui iubar excitat astri.

ACHIL. 1.180–1

Such as when Castor enters the waters of the Eurotas with a gasping horse and refreshes the tired ray of his own star.

The first two words, *Eurotae* and *qualis*, establish the location (i.e., the scene has shifted to Sparta, as opposed to Thessaly) and mark that this simile partakes in a deep poetic tradition. Forms of the same two words appear at or near the start of a simile, and mark an erotic context at Catullus 64.89 (*quales Eurotae*), Ovid, *Amores* 1.10 (*qualis ab Eurota*), and Propertius 3.14.17 (*qualis et Eurotae*). At this particular moment in the *Achilleid*, however, it is Statius' reworking of a Vergilian comparison that merits closer attention. The Vergilian simile occurs when Dido enters the poem:

qualis in Eurotae ripis aut per iuga Cynthi
exercet Diana choros, quam mille secutae
hinc atque hinc glomerantur Oreades; illa pharetram
fert umero gradiensque deas supereminet omnis
(Latonae tacitum pertemptant gaudia pectus):
talis erat Dido . . .

VERG. AEN. 1.498–503

Such as Diana working her troupe along the banks of the Eurotas or through the heights of Mt. Cynthus, whom thousands of mountain nymphs gather round in every direction while following. She carries a quiver on her shoulder and proceeds towering over the other goddesses (pleasure strikes the silent breast of Latona). Such was Dido . . .

The Diana-simile appears shortly before Venus conspires with Cupid to overwhelm Dido (*Aen.* 1.657–94), and, as ancients noted, forms the counterpart to the simile comparing Aeneas to Apollo. In fact, the likeness of Dido and Aeneas to the divine siblings presages the doomed relationship between Aeneas and Dido (*Serv. ad Aen.* 4.142). Moreover, each simile reworks two of Apollonius' similes for Jason and Medea,¹¹ so the background of that disastrous relationship bodes ill for Aeneas and Dido. The Vergilian similes thus ominously frame the sexual relationship of the main characters.

11 Clausen (2002) 38–40.

In the *Achilleid*, both *qualis* and the genitive form *Eurotae* defining a word that denotes water mark the connection with Vergil's simile. After Statius' initial two words, then, it seems that for his first two similes, he will use two Vergilian similes that are in a dialogic relationship. Statius does maintain that interplay, but takes it in a different direction with the next word, the name of Castor. Indeed, Statius seems to highlight his misdirection even in the arrangement of his diction. When he begins the simile by placing *Eurotae* before *qualis*, he inverts the word order found at the start of other Latin similes. At the thematic level, the comparison to the ephebic Castor aptly builds upon the ephebic dimensions introduced by the Apollo-simile, and even develops them since Castor and Achilles share a number of attributes. For instance, Castor, the famous "tamer of horses" (e.g., Hom. *Il.* 3.237, *Od.* 11.300), and Achilles, who took the best horses to Troy (*Il.* 2.770), had been linked by Vergil for their exceptional equestrian skill (*G.* 3.89–91). Moreover, Castor's cult in Sparta entailed that ephebic youths participate in a mock military battle in an initiation rite that appears to be a rite of passage.¹² In the *Achilleid*, the youthful Achilles will proceed through a number of rites before he proceeds to actual warfare. Finally, Castor, the mortal son of Tyndareus and Leda, offsets his young death by sharing in the immortality possessed by his brother Pollux, the son of Zeus (Hom. *Od.* 11.300–4, Verg. *Aen.* 6.121). Achilles' young death is offset in a different way by the immortality that he achieves through heroic poetry (e.g., Hom. *Il.* 9.413, Ov. *Met.* 12.617–19). By turning to Castor, then, Statius reinforces the treatment of the ephebic Achilles found in the earlier simile.

Deidamia and Diana

If Statius deviates from Vergil and omits mention of Diana in his second simile and develops the ephebic at the expense of the erotic, elsewhere he does not pass up a similar opportunity to use a Diana-simile in an erotic context.¹³ In particular, when he introduces Deidamia to the poem, he compares her to Diana:

sed quantum uirides pelagi Venus addita Nymphas
obruit, aut umeris quantum Diana relinquit

¹² Burkert (1983) 213.

¹³ Feeney (2004) 89 and Davis, p. 166 in this volume note the connection between this simile and the earlier ones involving Achilles.

Naidas, effulget tantum regina decori
Deidamia chori pulchrisque sororibus obstat.

.....

atque ipsi par forma deae est, si pectoris angues
ponat et exempta pacetur casside uultus.

ACHIL. 1.293–6, 299–300

As much as Venus surpasses the green nymphs of the sea, or as Diana leaves behind the Naiads by a full head, so much Deidamia, queen of the lovely troupe, shines out and eclipses her lovely sisters. . . . The beauty of the goddess herself is similar, if she should put aside the snakes on her breast and her visage be calmed with the helmet removed.

Starting with Homer (Nausicaa at *Od.* 6.102–8), nubile females may be compared to Artemis/Diana (e.g., Medea: Ap. Rhod. 3.875–84, V. Fl. 5.343–7), so this simile may seem formulaic. But there is a particular reason to think specifically of Vergil's Diana in this case. In Statius' comparison, the initial *-i* of *Diana* is long. Statius, like other authors, varies in treating the quantity as long (e.g., *Achil.* 1.825, *Theb.* 4.257, 10.369) or short (e.g., *Theb.* 1.535, 2.469, 4.225), but the lengthening in this context recalls the fact that the only instance in which Vergil lengthens the syllable is in the Diana-simile (*Aen.* 1.499). Moreover, Statius' description of Deidamia as a *regina* is redolent of the description of Dido just before the simile (*Aen.* 1.496). So whereas earlier Achilles had been introduced by a simile that likened him to Apollo and, by implication, the Vergilian Aeneas, now Deidamia is introduced in a way that links her to Diana and the Vergilian Dido.

Statius' allusive similes frame the way his characters are introduced, and in light of the foreboding Vergilian background, serious reservations about the relationship between Deidamia and Achilles seem natural. Specifically, whereas earlier Achilles was a liminal ephebe, now, as he sees Deidamia—indeed, a human female—for the first time, he approaches a sexual situation in which the female is constructed in light of Dido/Diana. Achilles, by implication, will now play the role of Aeneas. And, like Aeneas, Achilles will arrive at the shores of a foreign land and then have sex with a royal female before departing in order to participate in the Trojan war (or, in the case of the *Aeneid*, a second Trojan war; cf. *Aen.* 7.86–90). But in the *Achilleid*, the departure of the male lover from his beloved will not involve subterfuge (2.1–30). Moreover, unlike Aeneas, Achilles will leave after a child has been born and a marriage celebrated. A larger point, then, is that unlike the case of Dido and Aeneas, whose relationship is ill-starred from the start and presages martial

bloodshed between Rome and Carthage, the martial dimensions and consequences of Achilles' relationship with Deidamia are pointedly downplayed. To be sure, Achilles raises the possibility of war if Deidamia's father should threaten the lovers (1.657–60), but the young warrior ultimately uses words to persuade Lycomedes to accept his proposal of marriage (1.902–10). In fact, Statius' handling of the Scyrian episode diverges from versions of the story in which the armed Achilles impregnates Deidamia in the midst of sacking the island (e.g., schol. *ad Hom. Il.* 9.667–8). Instead of that mythic version in which warfare leads to an expression of Achilles' masculinity, Statius emphasizes cross-dressing, ephebic looks, and carding wool. In short, his Achilles has non-heroic, feminine attributes that offer an alternative to the treatment of Achilles as a masculine warrior.¹⁴ Moreover, a relationship, initially forbidden by a strict father, leads to marriage and childbirth. From this perspective, the poem operates in a "comic" tradition and in that regard stands as a sharp contrast to the "tragic" relationship of Dido and Aeneas. Statius' deployment of similes against the backdrop of the Vergilian comparisons hints at the directions in which his epic treatment of Scyros and Achilles' early life will proceed.

Achilles and Diana

The programmatic nature of Statius' string of opening similes becomes even more manifest when he reconfigures the Vergilian treatment of Diana yet again.¹⁵ Shortly after Achilles acquiesces to his mother's plan to dress like a girl, Thetis is compared to Latona and Achilles to Diana:

sic ubi uirgineis Hecate lassata Therapnis
ad patrem fratremque redit, comes haeret eunti
mater et ipsa umeros exsertaque brachia uelat;
ipsa arcum pharetrasque locat uestemque latentem
deducit sparsosque tumet componere crines.

ACHIL. 1.344–8

So when Hecate, tired, returns from girlish Therapnae to her father and brother, her mother attends to her as she walks, covering shoulders and exposed arms, and she arranges the bow and quiver, and draws down the cinched garment and takes pride in arranging the scattered locks.

14 Fantuzzi (2012) 27. Sistakou (2008) 173–6 discusses a Hellenistic precedent.

15 Feeney (2004) 90–1.

Achilles is now depicted as Diana, as if to take advantage of the earlier, unrealized opportunity presented by the *Eurotae qualis* simile. The comparison of Achilles to the goddess makes sense at the level of narrative in that his transformation into a girl has occurred,¹⁶ but it also introduces a problem in that the role of Diana had already been taken up by Deidamia. Now Achilles and Deidamia are near equivalents, and indeed they compete with one another in terms of beauty and excellence (1.824–5). As their relationship develops but before the rape occurs, it is clear that Deidamia is aware of their biological differences (e.g., 1.560–2), and she imagines that her sisters are aware as well (1.563). Yet from the perspective of outsiders, their burgeoning relationship seems to be between two women. After all, the disguised Achilles certainly deceives Lycomedes. From this cultural perspective their relationship borders upon one between two females.¹⁷ Within the narrative, then, Achilles feels acutely the pressure to prove himself a man through rape shortly after the depiction of interaction between the two “girls.” Lines of sexual demarcation have been deeply blurred, and the future hero must start on a different path.

Callimachus’ Athena as Backdrop

For all the importance of Statius’ reworking of the Vergilian backdrop, however, Callimachus’ fifth hymn is another significant model for the treatment of gender in the *Achilleid*. In particular, Statius’ comparison of Achilles to Castor recalls that Callimachus’ simile likens Athena to Castor and Polydeuces running alongside the river.

ἀεὶ καλὸν ὄμμα τὸ τηνας.
οὐδ’ ὅκα τὰν Ἰδαίη Φρυγὴ ἐδίκαζεν ἔριν,
οὔτ’ ἐς ὀρείχαλκον μεγάλα θεὸς οὔτε Σιμοῦντος
ἔβλεψεν δίναν ἐς διαφαινομένην
οὐδ’ Ἥρα Κύπρις δὲ διαυγέα χαλκὸν ἐλοῖσα
πολλάκι τὰν αὐτὰν δις μετέθηκε κόμαν.
ἀ δὲ δις ἐξήκοντα διαθρέξασα διαύλως,
οἷα παρ’ Εὐρώται τοὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι
ἀστέρες, ἐμπεράμως ἐνετρίψατο λιτὰ λαβοῖσα

16 For this “Ovidian” metamorphosis, see Feeney (2004) 91–2.

17 See Fantuzzi (2012) 58–9 for homoeroticism in literary treatments of Achilles and Deidamia.

χρίματα, τὰς ἰδίας ἔκγονα φυταλιᾶς,
 ὦ κῶραι, τὸ δ' ἔρευθος ἀνέδραμε, πρῶτον οὔαν
 ἢ ῥόδον ἢ σίβδας κόκκος ἔχει χροῖάν.
 τῷ καὶ νῦν ἄρσεν τι κομίσσατε μῶνον ἔλαιον,
 ὦ Κάστωρ, ὦ καὶ χρίεται Ἡρακλῆης
 οἷσέτε καὶ κτένα οἱ παγχρύσειον, ὥς ἀπὸ χαίταν
 πέξῃται, λιπαρὸν σμασαμένα πλόκαμον.

CALLIM. HYMN 5.17–32

Athena's face is always lovely. When a Phrygian judged the contest, the great goddess did not look into oreichalc nor into the shining swirl of the Simois. Hera did not either, but Aphrodite took the translucent bronze and multiple times rearranged the same piece of hair twice. But Athena ran 120 double course lengths, like the Lacedaimonians by the Eurotas, the stars, and she skillfully took and rubbed in simple oil, the product of her own cultivation. O girls, the flush sprang up, the sort of bloom the rose or pomegranate seed has early in the year. Therefore now bring something masculine, just oil, with which Castor and Hercules are anointed. Bring for her a comb of all gold, so that she may comb her hair, having cleaned her shining locks.

Latin poets responded to this simile in various ways and more could be said about each of the Latin similes both in terms of their reworking of Callimachus as well as the precedents they create for Statius. But for the purposes of this chapter the point is that Statius echoes Callimachus. Specifically, he (like Prop. 3.14.17, but unlike the other Latin poets) includes Castor in the simile and (unlike the other poets except Verg. *Aen.* 1.498) situates him near the waters of the Eurotas.¹⁸ Moreover, Statius' simile describes Achilles as he washes in a river, and the larger context of the Callimachean hymn is the bathing of the statue with river water. For the *Achilleid*, however, the backdrop of the Callimachean simile also raises larger thematic issues about sexual ambiguity. The comparison of Athena to a male may not seem unusual since elsewhere in Greek art and literature the goddess is normally treated as sexually neutral if not masculine. Indeed, even in Callimachus' hymn she never displays a full femininity (e.g., *Hymn* 5.29),¹⁹ and the goddess' masculinity influences

18 Instead of the waters of the river, Propertius 3.14.17 mentions the sand of the arena in Sparta. Callimachus does not explicitly mention the river, but his language implies the location; cf. Bulloch (1985) 133.

19 Hunter (2008) 135.

the overall narrative strategies of the poem.²⁰ She did not attempt to beautify herself before she went to be judged by Paris in the beauty contest (18–20), and the attendants working her ritual are asked to bring something masculine (ἄρσεν τι κομίσσατε, 29).

Nonetheless, Callimachus extensively develops the feminine and sensual side of Athena, and specific points are picked up in the *Achilleid*. Though she does not adorn herself, Athena still has a lovely face (*Hymn* 5.17). The hymn also celebrates Athena for anointing herself skillfully with simple oils. The act of anointing may occur after athletic competition (e.g., Xen. *Symp.* 2) but it also has erotic associations (e.g., Apul. *Met.* 10.21). Indeed, the goddess' anointing brings out her red blush, a familiar marker of beauty. The narrator then calls for the goddess to be given a golden comb to arrange her radiant hair. Shining hair is another erotic marker, and the verb (πέξῃται) that Callimachus uses to describe the combing is rare and finds a parallel only in the Homeric scene in which Hera, preparing to seduce Zeus, combs her hair (*Il.* 14.176).²¹ The sensuality lurking behind Callimachus' allusion to the scene involving the Homeric Hera is strengthened by the fact that the Homeric goddess functions as a sort of double of Aphrodite.²² Callimachus' description of Athena thus explicitly echoes Hera and implicitly evokes Aphrodite, and in that regard the poet reconvenes the trio that were famously together when Paris judged their beauty.

Callimachus' use of metal also develops Athena's sensuality.²³ In the literary tradition, gold is central to Aphrodite's sexuality (Hes. *Op.* 521),²⁴ and Athena is dissociated from the works of "golden Aphrodite." Instead she is said to have taught humans to use bronze for martial activity (*Hom. Hymn Aph.* 13). Each goddess thus has her metal that reflects her particular attributes. By contrast, Callimachus utterly reverses the goddesses' affinities with the metals when he associates Athena with gold (*Hymn* 5.31) and assigns a brazen mirror to Aphrodite as she prepares for the judgment (21). This inversion results in a sexualized Athena, and indeed the poem goes on to depict the goddess' homoerotic relationship with Chariclo (57–8, 70–4).²⁵

The hymn's balancing of Athena's masculinity with her feminine sensuality is perhaps best captured by Callimachus' claim that the goddess did not stare

20 Morrison (2005).

21 Bulloch (1985) 142.

22 Hadjittofi (2008) 30.

23 Hadjittofi (2008) 28–30.

24 Olson (2012) 185–6.

25 Hadjittofi (2008) 31–2.

into the ὀρείχαλκον (5.19) as she headed off to the judgment. The ancients variously explained this metal,²⁶ but in Callimachus' hymn it serves as a metonymy for a "mirror,"²⁷ a sense that is reinforced in the remainder of the verse when Athena refuses to look at herself in the waters of the Simois.²⁸ Strikingly, by Statius' day, the metal was exclusively associated in epic poetry with martial activity. The first attestation of the word appears in the pseudo-Hesiodic *Scutum* where it is the material out of which greaves are made (122). The few attestations of the word in Latin indicate its martial resonance. Turnus puts on body armor made from the material (Verg. *Aen.* 12.87), and Bellona, a Roman goddess of warfare, brandishes weapons made from the metal (V. Fl. 3.61). Indeed, Statius himself imagines a spear was made of this substance (*Theb.* 10.660). So whatever may have been the truth regarding the metal, Latin poets associated it with weapons. From the perspective of that tradition, the easiest reading is that Athena refuses to look into a martial object in order to beautify herself. In this light, then, the argument that Callimachus uses the word for a shield is particularly attractive. For certain, by declining the opportunity to enhance her looks by looking at her reflection in a weapon, Athena maintains an uneasy relationship between masculine warfare and feminine sensuality.

Statius picks up on both themes and details found in the Callimachean hymn. At the most obvious level, Achilles' likeness to Castor is important for emphasizing ephebic themes. At the same time, however, given the dynamics of the allusive similes, the comparison implicates Athena. That Achilles would be like Athena is perhaps not surprising. In Callimachus' simile, Athena is represented as a powerful runner (*Hymn* 5.23), and thus apt for the heroically swift-footed Achilles. In addition, Athena is a special patron of Achilles throughout the *Iliad*. At the start of the poem, when Achilles wants to kill Agamemnon, the goddess appears to Achilles alone and advises him against such an act (*Il.* 1.194–221). Later, before Achilles receives divine armor from his mother, he received aid when Athena arms him, encircles his head with a golden cloud, puts a fire above his head, and gives a tremendously frightening scream (18.204–27). When Achilles is caught in the waters of the Scamander, he prays to Zeus for help, and it is Athena who, together with Poseidon, rushes to his aid (21.272–86). Finally, just as Achilles is about to kill Hector, he receives the aid of Athena, who claims that she and Achilles together—a point emphasized by two dual forms at *Iliad* 22.216 and 218—will gain glory for killing Hector (22.216). The warrior goddess thus partakes in Achilles' glory and is a perfect model for Achilles.

26 Michell (1955) 21–2.

27 Bulloch (1985) 130.

28 Hadjittofi (2008) 29.

In the proem of the *Achilleid*, however, Statius indicates that he will go beyond the Homeric depiction of Achilles. For the *Achilleid*, then, the relationship—and the heroic values associated with it—between Athena and Achilles needs to be rewritten. For this purpose, the Callimachean Athena provides an alternative model for the ephebic and sexually liminal Achilles. One specific point concerns Athena's hair. When Achilles arrives at the beach in Scyros, he initially wants nothing to do with his mother's plan to dress as a girl and thus to be hidden away from the Greeks headed to Troy. He changes his mind, however, once he sees Deidamia, who, as we have seen, is compared to Diana, Venus, and Minerva (1.293–300). At this point in the narrative, then, Minerva provides a backdrop not just for Achilles, but also for Deidamia, the object of his lust. As happened with Diana, both Achilles and Deidamia are compared to a goddess, and thus distinctions between masculine and feminine are not sharply delineated. Moreover, amidst this backdrop of nubile sexuality, the comparison to Diana and Venus makes sense, but Statius' mention of Minerva has been viewed as ironic.²⁹ But in some sense the presence of Minerva need not be a problem since she was worshipped as a fertility goddess in Greece and in Italy,³⁰ and this meeting between Achilles and Deidamia is the precursor to productive sexuality. From this perspective, it seems telling that Statius' description of Minerva's erotic character is enhanced by the fact that he specifically mentions her beauty when she discards martial equipment such as her helmet and her breast-plate (299–300). The idea of a fierce warrior discarding such gear maps onto the narrative in the sense that Achilles too puts aside his martial pursuits. But the nexus of warfare and gender is important here as well. In the *Iliad*, when Athena is about to enter battle, she removes her peplos and arms herself (*Il.* 5.734–6). Ancient critics read this scene in terms of gender: the goddess takes off her feminine clothes and puts on equipment suitable for war (schol.^A *ad* Hom. *Il.* 5.734, schol.^T *ad* 736). The dynamic in the *Achilleid* is the reverse, with the martial giving way to the feminine. In fact, the implicit point in the comparison between Deidamia and Minerva is that Minerva's beauty is enhanced by the display of her hair. While the Homeric Athena is said to have “lovely hair” (*Il.* 6.92), the epithet is formulaic and, in the case of Athena, does not have obvious erotic suggestions. Statius initially seems to follow that kind of representation when he describes Minerva's hair as *seueras* (1.288–9), but the removal of the helmet leads in a different direction. Minerva's hair is both chaste as well as alluring. That latter dimension recalls Callimachus' hymn, where Athena's hair is eroticized.

29 Heslin (2005) 237.

30 Burkert (1966) 1–25; Castagnoli (1979) 10–11; Calame (2001) 130–4.

The second important moment in the *Achilleid* that draws upon the Callimachean simile occurs when Achilles decides to remove his feminine raiment. The scene is set up by yet another simile involving Minerva and Diana:

nitet ante alias regina comesque
Pelides: qualis Siculae sub rupibus Aetnae
Naiadas Ennaeas inter Diana feroxque
Pallas et Elysii lucebat sponsa tyranni.

ACHIL. 1.823–6

The princess and Peleus' son stand out before all the rest. Such as under the crags of Sicilian Aetna, Diana, among the Naiads of Henna, and fierce Pallas and the bride of the Elysian ruler shone.

In addition to the presence of the goddesses, this simile recalls the earlier Diana-simile in a few ways: Deidamia is dubbed a *regina*, an echo of 1.295, and the Naiads once again are included in the comparison. But unlike that earlier simile in which Deidamia outshone all her sisters, here Achilles is included, and it is not clear which character is compared to which goddess. That uncertainty is precisely the point: Achilles can be compared to anyone of those goddesses, and thus his effeminate beauty is established. But the use of the patronymic, a pointed contrast to the earlier privileging of Thetis' relationship with her son and the designation that marks Achilles at the start of the *Iliad*, points in a heroic direction. Indeed, this simile occurs at the moment when Lycomedes, the king of the island, sees an opportunity to arrange a marriage of his daughters to Diomedes and Odysseus. The king thus arranges for his daughters to dance for the two visitors, but Achilles, facing the possibility of being the object of male desire, refuses to dance and, by implication, to adopt a submissive role. He then removes his disguise, and when discarding his clothes, he gazes at himself in a shield. By putting Achilles in the center of the shield, Statius makes this a pivotal moment in the work, and in Achilles' life. One model for such a scene is when Apollonius has the partially nude Aphrodite stare at her likeness that is reflected in the bronze shield of Ares (Ap. Rhod. 1.742–6).³¹ Like Apollonius' scene, Statius' embodies multiple contradictions: the shield, a masculine emblem, is engraved with battles (*Achil.* 1.853), yet it functions as a mirror, a feminine object and reflects an image of Achilles that is hardly masculine.³²

³¹ Barchiesi (2005) 63.

³² On mirrors as feminine attributes, cf. Gell. *NA* 6.12.5; Austin and Olson (2004) *ad* Ar. *Thesm.* 140.

The scene depicting Achilles staring at himself also reworks Callimachus' handling of Athena's refusal to look at herself in the ὀρείχαλκον. After Achilles decides to discard his disguise and looks at himself in the shield (*Achil.* 1.860–2), the gleam (*lux*) returns his visage and he sees himself as a woman in the golden shield (*auro*). Both the gleam and the type of metal are significant. The word *lux* (1.863) is an epicism for the gleam of armor or weapons,³³ and that sense stems from the Homeric phrase “bronze gleam” (ἀὐγή χαλκείη, *Il.* 13.341). However, Callimachus transforms the Homeric phrase into something quite different, namely the “brilliant bronze” (διαυγέα χαλκόν, *Hymn* 5.21) that Aphrodite used as a mirror before she went off to Ida. The Callimachean passage thus slightly alters Homeric diction in formal terms in that the Homeric noun ἀὐγή has become a compound adjective and the Homeric adjective χαλκείη has become a noun. Moreover, Callimachus' transformation playfully hints at the idea that behind all those epic battles scenes at Troy and the gleam of brazen weapons lies the mirror by which Aphrodite beautified herself before the judgment that led to the theft of Helen and thus the war at Troy. Feminine beauty and masculine warfare are thus intertwined.

In the *Achilleid*, *lux* draws upon the martial heritage of the word, but uses it, as in Callimachus' hymn, in a scene that blurs sexual boundaries. After all, Achilles sees his feminine reflection. In this respect, it is significant that the shield in Statius' scene is golden, that is, the metal that was associated with Aphrodite and erotic objects. Indeed, whereas in Apollonius' scene, Aphrodite stares into a bronze shield, Statius uses the erotically charged gold. The golden shield in which Achilles sees himself thus partakes in a tradition in which feminine sensuality and masculine battles are entangled and even confused. The upshot is, just as with Aphrodite's victory in the Judgment, Achilles' gazing will also lead towards the deaths of many soldiers at Troy.

Achilles' transition to the heroic world, however, is not straightforward. He unquestionably exhibits behavior that anticipates his Homeric incarnation, for instance, in Statius' simile that likens Achilles to a lion rejecting the taming of his trainer (against the backdrop of the Homeric Achilles, who is compared to a lion five times):³⁴

ut leo, materno cum raptus ab ubere mores
 accipit pectique iubas hominemque uereri
 edidicit nullasque rapi nisi iussus in iras,
 si semel aduerso radiauit lumine ferrum,

33 *TLL* 7.2.1913.37–52.

34 Moulton (1977) 100.

eiurata fides domitorque inimicus, in illum
prima fames, timidoque pudet seruisse magistro.

ACHIL. 1.858–63

Like when a lion is taken from its mother and has submitted to training, learning to allow its mane to be combed, to fear humans, and never to flare into anger unless commanded: if once it sees the gleam of steel against it, the bond is broken and the trainer becomes an enemy; he is the object of its first hunger, and it regrets having served such a frightened master.

At 1.858 Statius' *ut leo* recalls the common Homeric phrase that likens Achilles to a lion (ὥς . . . λέων, *Il.* 20.164; cf. 24.41, 572). At 1.862 *eiurata* implies a strong, formal conclusion to the trust or agreement between the lion and his tamer. This stark renunciation of *fides* between man and lion confirms the Homeric Achilles' belief that there are no bonds between men and lions (*Il.* 22.261–2); indeed, Statius' *eiurata fides* glosses the Homeric phrase, ὅρκια πιστά. At this transitional moment, then, the echo of his brutally blunt language in the *Iliad* seemingly marks the return of the martial and heroic Achilles. But the narrative itself reveals that Achilles' transformation is not that clear-cut. Within a few verses, when Deidamia learns that Odysseus has revealed Achilles' true identity, she cries out. Achilles' immediate reaction is to hesitate, and the narrator startlingly indicates that his *uirtus* is shattered (*infracta*). His desire to go to Troy has weakened, and the expedition is stalled a little bit longer. In fact, Achilles lowers his shield (1.889), an act that undoes his taking up of the shield (879).

Achilles does of course head to Troy, but, as Plato and other ancient critics noted, he continues to exhibit feminine behavior even at Troy. The Platonic Socrates criticizes Achilles for weeping over Patroclus like a woman (Pl. *Resp.* 387e–388e; cf. 605d9–e1), and he also argues that fouling the body of an enemy by dragging it in the dust reflects a womanish mind (469d6–e2).³⁵ The similes that I have discussed in this chapter reflect that, for Achilles, the feminine and masculine coexist not just in his behavior at Troy, as Plato's Socrates charges, but at the earliest moments of his development. The narrative of the *Achilleid* takes that dynamic and represents the hero moving at various points between the poles of biologically and culturally determined gender.

35 Zoilus of Amphipolis (*FGrH* 71 F 11) also attacks Achilles' effeminate weeping.

PART 5

Conflict, Power, and Death in the Thebaid



“War Came in Disarray . . .” (*Thebaid* 7.616): Statius and the Depiction of Battle

Rhiannon Ash

When the satirist Juvenal wearily asserts that he is all too aware how huge are the ash trees hurled by the Centaur Monychus during the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs (*Sat.* 1.11), he pinpoints a problem—the ever-deepening challenge for any aspiring epic poet in creating lively and engaging battle narratives. By now, sophisticated contemporary audiences knew what to expect. Indeed, many of the educated elite were probably more familiar with literary depictions of battles than the real thing. Even in the professional army, it was increasingly common for auxiliaries to do the fighting, with legionaries reserved for intervention if things went wrong.¹ If we take Juvenal seriously, budding epic poets (Statius included) ran the risk that their creative attempts to project martial grandeur would quickly be dismissed as stylized bombast. This did not mean that epic poets abandoned scale and difference as a way to captivate their audiences: so, Lucan’s assertive opening that he will tell of *bella . . . plus quam ciuilia* (“wars more than civil,” 1.1) swiftly opens up this competitive realm of scope and novelty right from the start. Against this backdrop, one aim of this chapter is to consider how Statius shapes (and misshapes) his battle scenes in the *Thebaid*, taking into account the expectations of a contemporary audience well-versed in the traditions of epic and historiography.²

Literature does not exist in a vacuum, however. This chapter also considers Statius’ epic battles in a wider Domitianic cultural context. Although the notion of martial valor is intricately connected with traditional conceptions of Roman *uirtus*, the familiar ways to acquire personal glory had evaporated under the principate. Whereas in the past, oratory or military excellence (or ideally, both) had been the main markers of aristocratic achievement, both

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- 1 Gilliver (1996) traces the evolution of this phenomenon, with Agricola’s battle at Mons Graupius being an important example.
 - 2 Gibson (2008) offers an illuminating study of Statius’ battle narratives. Miniconi (1951) 95–9 and Raabe (1974) 166–241 are also useful; Willcock (1983) and Horsfall (1987) analyze Vergilian battles; Ash (2002) explores the interaction between historiography and epic battle narratives.

spheres under the principate were now restricted. As Masterson observes, "Construction of manhood in this time was instead a matter of inter-personal competition and self-cultivation that, while metaphorized as martial and not completely lacking in extroverted aspects, was for the most part an interior affair."³ In reality, the fates of generals such as Domitius Corbulo under Nero and Antonius Primus and Agricola under the Flavians vividly demonstrate that conspicuous military talent outside the world of epic was a double-edged sword: generals who were too competent posed a threat, either as potential imperial challengers, or in a more abstract way, as an embarrassing spotlight on the comparatively poor military credentials of an incumbent *princeps*.⁴

The Martial Framework

Two central ways of breathing fresh life into any potentially tired epic convention are firstly to delay its inclusion and secondly to use it creatively (but sparingly) when it does feature. Statius deploys both methods deftly in presenting his own battles.⁵ His tendency to impose obstacles to the narrative pursuit of warfare has been discussed by scholars, but the cumulative (even humorous) impact of this technique over the epic's first half is worth elaborating.⁶ The first teasing reference is when Statius outlines the power-sharing arrangement between the two brothers (involving alternating one-year periods of rule) and stridently concludes: *haec mora pugnae / sola* ("this was the only delay to the fighting," *Theb.* 1.142–3).⁷ The expectation thus created (and arguably enhanced by enjambment of *sola*) is that transition to formal battle narrative will come very soon. That initial impression is further endorsed by a god's weighty words, as Jupiter himself promises Oedipus: *noua sontibus arma / iniciam regnis* ("I will impose fresh fighting on the guilty kingdom," 1.241–2).⁸ Then, personified Rumor in Thebes adds reinforcement: *et iam bella canit* ("and now

3 Masterson (2005) 289. Habinek (2000) offers valuable discussion.

4 On Agricola and Antonius Primus, see Ash (1999) 147–65.

5 Even in the *Thebaid's* second half, the proportion of the narrative dedicated to formal fighting remains relatively low in books 7, 8, and 11 (7.632–823; 8.373–606, 655–766; 11.403–579), book 9 is more consistently martial, while book 10 only returns to open fighting (10.449–939) after the Argive night-time raid (10.1–448). See Gibson (2008) 86–96 for Statius' technique of "foreshortening" battle narratives.

6 McNelis (2007) 86–93.

7 This recalls Lucan's Crassus as *sola futuri / ... belli medius mora* ("the only intervening delay of the future war," 1.99–100); cf. Roche (2009b) 167.

8 The adjective *noua* ("fresh") suggests repetition, but also novelty.

she sings of wars," 2.213). Yet formal pitched warfare does not break out until *Thebaid* 7 when Jupiter, irritated by the Argives' slow progress, sends Mercury to Mars to order him to get the war started. Despite the sense in book one that war is looming, it does not materialize formally for six books.

True, we do get the single combat between Tydeus and Polynices in the first book (1.401–81), but the combatants conspicuously do not even draw their swords before Adrastus, woken by the noise in the middle of the night, intervenes, and the fighting metamorphoses into antagonistic speech.⁹ This movement from conflict to angry words wryly reverses the normal epic dynamic, whereby competitive exchanges of insults usually serve as a *prelude* to physical fighting.¹⁰ So, the conflict is abortive and runs in reverse; and in any case, it paradoxically prepares the way for a lasting friendship between Tydeus and Polynices. Then, moving away from single combat to another extreme, we have the nocturnal ambush, where Eteocles (who has exceeded his rightful period as king) sends fifty men to ambush the lone Tydeus in a cowardly surprise attack after his unsuccessful embassy (2.527–742). This extraordinary episode has Tydeus, against the odds, kill all the ambushers except Maeon, sent back to Thebes as a messenger. The extreme *uariatio* between one-to-one combat in book one and fifty-to-one combat in book two is pointed and inventive. It reworks in an exaggerated and expressive way the familiar historiographical motif of one Roman being worth many barbarians in battle.¹¹ That latent idea is activated explicitly when Eteocles, hearing news of his defeat, is said not to have balanced accurately Tydeus' bravery against the number of attackers: *nec numero uirtutem animumque rependit* ("he did not weigh up valor and spirit against numbers," 3.8). In an epic driven by duality (the two brothers Polynices and Eteocles fighting for power), Tydeus' outstanding and heroic single-handed massacre of Eteocles' men is provocative (and ultimately misleading). As Hardie suggests, he "becomes the repository for the *unus/omnes* conceits of the earlier Latin epic tradition."¹² Yet despite his heroism in the face of a cowardly attack, Tydeus will not survive, nor will he retain the moral high ground.

9 Adrastus ages in an accelerated way as the epic progresses, which vividly suggests time passing (Vergil does something similar with Ascanius). When we first meet Adrastus, Statius describes his age elaborately, *medio de limite uitae / in senium uergens*, "now at the midpoint of his life, verging towards old-age," (1.390–1). Then we see *longaeuo . . . Adrasto* ("aged Adrastus," 4.74), *senis . . . Adrasti* ("the old man Adrastus," 6.626), and *quamquam aeger senio* ("although sick with old-age," 8.262). Eteocles in a speech scorns *Adrasti senium* ("the old-age of Adrastus," 10.31).

10 On such ritualized heroic "flyting" in Homer, see Parks (1990).

11 Kraus (1994) 131.

12 Hardie (1993) 8.

Almost the last graphic image we see of Tydeus alive is where he gloats over the severed head of Melanippus (the man who inflicted the deadly wound) and then grotesquely chews on the brains (8.751–66, predicted by Dis at 8.71–2).¹³

Apart from these two episodes, the delivery of real fighting in this epic is invisible in *Thebaid* 1–6, despite the prominent and ubiquitous notion that warfare on a grand scale is looming. Time and time again battle is deferred or derailed through various inventive techniques, allowing Statius to play with paradox and add complexity to his epic voice. So, at the start of book four, two years have passed since the Argives have armed themselves for war when *tandem miseris data copia belli* (“at last the opportunity for war was given to the wretches,” 4.4).¹⁴ The register of *miseris* (“wretches”) is curiously double-edged: on the surface it seems to evoke pity for the Argives as future participants in an impending war with Thebes, but *tandem* (“at last”) and the detail of the two-year delay suggest that their wretchedness has been triggered precisely by having to wait such a long time before being put out of their misery and getting the opportunity to fight the Thebans. In warped fashion, the Argives are being tantalized by something distasteful and destructive.

That twisted tantalizing is extended when an anxious Bacchus conjures up a crippling drought to stop the Argive advance, because he thinks that the Thebans are not ready to fight (4.680–843). The Argive soldiers are afflicted by searing thirst until they meet Hypsipyle, who leads them to the only water still available. When the men hear, and then at last see the river, the shout goes up: *aquae! . . . / aquae!* (“Water! . . . Water!”, 4.811–12). This formulation seems to recall the famous shout of *thalatta thalatta* (“The sea! The sea!”, Xen. *Anab.* 4.7.24) from the army of Greek mercenaries, the Ten Thousand, when finally glimpsing the Black Sea after their long march home from Persia. The Greeks had originally gone there after being hired by the young Persian prince Cyrus, who kept quiet about his real plan, which was to oust his own brother

13 McNelis (2007) 132–3 helpfully discusses Tydeus’ cannibalism (also in the epic cycle: see the schol. *ad* Hom. *Il.* 5.126), contrasting Statius’ version with the generally positive image of Tydeus in Homer.

14 Parkes (2012) comments on the time frame: “It would seem that the troops are gathering for war in the third year since the brothers’ quarrel and Polynices’ exile: one year has been taken up by Eteocles’ agreed term of rule (*completo . . . anno*, 2.394); Tydeus’ embassy (2.370–3.406) and the augury (3.451–565) take place in the second; cf. Dominik (1994b) 122, who argues that Adrastus delays the inevitable outbreak of war for two years (based upon 4.1–4). The reference has alternatively been taken to indicate a two-year gap between the end of Book 3 and start of Book 4 (Vessey [1973] 318); the notion of a three-year gap (so, e.g., Hershkovitz [1998] 44) is precluded by the ancients’ custom of counting inclusively.”

Artaxerxes from the throne of Persia: that failed when Cyrus was killed at the battle of Cunaxa, leaving the Greek mercenaries to find their own way home.¹⁵ This theme of fraternal strife and the description of the soldiers' shout links the two passages.¹⁶ Yet in comparison with the Ten Thousand, finally within reach of home, Statius' Argives are now only just setting out to war, so this echo of Xenophon further accentuates narrative deceleration. What transpires after Statius' desperate and thirsty Argives leap into the river is also striking, as military language is transposed into an unexpected new context. The normal distinctions between military ranks are obliterated as individuals rush to quench their thirst, the fierce current sweeps away some men, careless of their own safety in desperation for water, and some even trample over their own friends. Statius sums up the chaos:

agmina bello
decertare putes iustumque in gurgite Martem
perfurere aut captam tolli uictoribus urbem.

THEB. 4.828–30

You would think that battlelines were contesting in war and that a just conflict was raging in the stream, or that a captured city was being destroyed by the victors.

Once again we are given a substitute, almost a black parody of a real battle, and one that is reminiscent of famous scenes of hydromachy in epic.¹⁷ Yet no enemy is in sight. Even so, the metaphor of the intense thirst which grips these soldiers risking their lives by jumping into the waters is an apt reflection of their eagerness for conflict, long delayed.

15 Rood (2004) offers lively analysis of this scene's afterlife. He kindly draws my attention to Plut. *Ant.* 49.5 (with Pelling [1988] 239) on the joy of Antony's soldiers at crossing the Araxes into Armenia unopposed, and suggests that in Statius, the lack of distinction between officers and soldiers also seems to look back to Xenophon, and that drinking river water even though spoiled by blood recalls Thuc. 7.84 (with Hornblower [2008] 3.733–6).

16 Not just the geminated shout, but both authors' careful descriptions of the shout passing down the line of soldiers link the two passages: *παρεγγυώντων* ("passing the word down the line," Xen. *Anab.* 4.7.24); *longusque uirum super ora cucurrit* / *clamor* ("a long shout developed and passed from man to man," *Theb.* 4.811–12).

17 See Fenno (2005) for water imagery in Iliadic battle scenes. Statius uses the counterfactual dimension to add intriguing layers to his epic, as Gibson (2008) 100–2 argues.

In different ways, this passage demonstrates Statius' creative treatment of battle, conspicuous by its formal absence from the poem's first half, but still present in other forms. Indeed, McNelis argues persuasively that internecine conflict is even played out in the epic's competing poetics (mirroring the central theme of the work), as the Callimachean ethos of *Thebaid* 1–6 is confronted by an anti-Callimachean narrative strategy once the battle-scenes unfold in *Thebaid* 7–12. He sees crucial interpretative significance in Statius' description of Vulcan making a necklace worn by Argia at her wedding to Polynices (2.269–96); and in the fact that Vulcan is helped by the Telchines (2.274), Callimachus' poetic enemies in the prologue of the *Aetia*. "Statius creates this poetic friction by having the Telchines assist in the creation of a necklace that catalyses a narrative of violence, and then by alluding to Callimachus' poetry in ways that postpone that narrative interest."¹⁸ Conflict is ever-present in this epic, albeit in surprising ways, as Callimachean aetiologies compete with martial themes.

Let Battle Commence!

The tension between speed and delay spills over into the second half of the poem, as the exasperated Jupiter looks down upon the Argives *cunctantes* ("delaying," 7.1) and enlists Mercury to spur Mars into action in a long speech (another delay!) paradoxically peppered with language urging haste (*rapido . . . saltu*, "with a rapid leap," 7.6; *propere*, "quickly," 13; *quodni praecipitat pugnas dictoque iubentis / ocius impingit Tyriis Danaa agmina muris*, "but unless he hastens the fighting and faster than the utterance of the one commanding plants Argive battle-lines on the walls of Thebes . . .", 27–8). Even when Mercury has delivered his message to Mars, Statius adds a playful touch as we see Mars *nec longa moratus* ("not delaying long," 81, suggesting that he did delay a bit), and then he further decelerates the action by a messenger speech, a description of the Theban allies, a harangue from Eteocles, and a last-ditch appeal to Polynices from his mother Jocasta. When the war finally does start, the Argive advance is totally chaotic: *nullo uenit ordine bellum / confusique duces uulgo, et neglecta regentum / imperia* ("war came in disarray, generals were mixed up with the common soldiers, and the commands of the leaders were ignored," 616–18). This is an extraordinary moment.¹⁹ Despite the years of preparation, the normal military hierarchy has disintegrated entirely. Yet it is an expres-

¹⁸ McNelis (2007) 13.

¹⁹ Gibson (2008) 88 contrasts it with the dominant mode of Homeric battle narratives, where fighting is between the *promachoi*, "fighters up front."

sive way to begin narrating the action of what is effectively a civil war, where normal rules of combat cease to apply and the usual mechanisms of control evaporate. Tacitus will reprise this device at significant moments in his own civil war narrative, the *Histories*. So, Otho begins his *coup d'état* by ordering the armory to be opened up, with the result that *rapta statim arma sine more et ordine militia . . . miscentur auxiliaribus galeis scutisque, nullo tribunorum centurionumue adhortante, sibi quisque dux et instigator* ("weapons were seized at once without regard for military custom and hierarchy. . . . They wore auxiliary helmets and shields without distinction, there were none of the tribunes or centurions guiding them, each man was his own general and instigator," *Hist.* 1.38.3). Likewise, at the start of the first battle of Bedriacum, the Vitellians begin fighting in a totally disorganized way, with one part of the army simply disobeying orders: *dum legiones de ordine sortiuntur, equites prorupere* ("while the legions were drawing lots about the battle-line, the cavalry burst forth," 2.41.2). For Tacitus as much as for Statius, the mixing of troops with other elements is symptomatic of civil war.²⁰

As suggested above, the other way for an epic poet to captivate audiences is to inject creativity into the very fabric of his battle-scenes. In this context, Statius magnificently exploits the surreal, the grotesque, and above all the visual in productive ways over the course of *Thebaid* 8–11 (the main battle books), ruthlessly violating generic and moral boundaries and underscoring the *nefas* of civil war at every turn.²¹ As Newlands proposes, "Statius rewrote the rules of battle epic for the age of Domitian and made the form more arresting, more compassionate, and more desolate."²² How does he achieve this? One way in which Statius makes his battles stand out is through using the narrative mode of paradoxography. In generic terms, paradoxography is a distinct branch of classical literature which assembles instances of abnormal, marvelous, or inexplicable phenomena, but it can also be embedded in other genres too.²³ Wonder is not perhaps the most obvious emotion to experience

20 Damon (2003) 180.

21 The visual dimension and competing focalizations are hugely important in Statius' epic world: see Bernstein (2004) on the destabilizing impact of spectatorship in the duel between Eteocles and Polynices in *Thebaid* 11, and Gervais (2013) on viewing violence in the *Thebaid* from the comparative perspective of the films of Quentin Tarantino. Internal spectators are an expressive device in other civil war narratives too: Ash (2007).

22 Newlands (2004) 154.

23 Schepens and Delcroix (1996) offer a useful survey. Woodman (1992) explores how this genre is imported creatively into Tacitus' account of Nero's principate. Myers (2000) demonstrates how Statius in the *Silvae* consistently describes the architectural achievements of his patrons in the language of paradoxography.

when viewing battles, but Statius nonetheless sets up that expectation when Dis, speaking to Tisiphone, characterizes the upcoming battles: *ede nefas, quod mirer ego* ("bring forth an atrocity at which I may marvel," 8.68). In any case, that sense of wonder has arguably already been triggered in the first death of the fighting, when the Theban horseman Pteleras rides into battle only to be hit by Tydeus' spear and pinned to his horse. Statius likens him to the liminal figure of a Centaur, half-man, half-horse hybrid, and imagines the human component dying before the equine part, still able to gallop (7.638–9).²⁴ Centaurs, being extraordinary creatures, naturally attracted the attention of paradoxographers, and the Hadrianic Phlegon of Tralles, for example, has a lively section on them in *On Marvels* 34.²⁵ One Centaur was allegedly preserved in honey and sent from Egypt to the emperor Claudius in Rome, as the equestrian writer, the elder Pliny recalls, having seen it for himself (*HN* 7.35).²⁶ Statius' programmatic first death in the conflict is therefore constructed in such a way as to embed the bizarre world of paradoxography in his battle-scenes.

We can see similar paradoxographical strands in subsequent battle narratives too. One regular element which attracted the paradoxographers was the discovery of giant bones and teeth, apparently physical proof of the familiar epic device that men were bigger in the heroic age than they were in the here and now. So, Phlegon has a whole section on the phenomenon (*On Marvels* 11–19), as does the elder Pliny (*HN* 7.73–6).²⁷ Of course, strange, larger-than-life conflict was a staple ingredient of epic, as Juvenal's weary complaint about the Centauromachy (1.11) reminds us, but in one case Statius gives the device a peculiarly paradoxographical twist.²⁸ When Diana's favorite Arcadian boy-hero, Parthenopaeus, wreaks havoc on the battlefield, Mars stirs up Dryas, who is a Giant and a descendant of Orion (*Theb.* 7.256–7, 9.843).²⁹ The youthful Parthenopaeus understandably gazes in complete horror as Dryas advances: *sic iuuenem saeui conspecta mole Dryantis / iam non ira subit, sed leti nuntius*

24 Statius reprises the image as he describes cavalry on horses *corpora ceu mixti dominis* ("as if they were bodily fused with their masters," 8.392). The method of killing is revisited when Tydeus kills a cavalryman by piercing *una duo corpora pinu* ("two bodies with one spear," 8.538).

25 See Hansen (1996) 170–6.

26 Beagon (2005) 171–2. Cf. Lucr. 5.878–900 for a strongly rationalizing assessment of centaurs, arguing that they are a biological impossibility because of the different growth-rates of the two components.

27 See further Hansen (1996) 137–48; Beagon (2005) 252–60.

28 See Innes (1979); P. R. Hardie (1983), (1986) 85–156.

29 The gigantic Dryas is an ominous foe to face, given Statius' accentuation of Parthenopaeus' physical and emotional fragility: Parkes (2005a) 360.

horror ("so after seeing the massive stature of savage Dryas, the young man was no longer overcome by anger but by a horror presaging his death," 9.861–2). Despite desperately praying to his patron goddess Diana, Parthenopaeus is mortally wounded by Dryas' spear. Yet something remarkable happens next: *tum cadit ipse Dryas (mirum!) nec uulneris umquam / conscius: olim auctor teli causaeque patebunt*³⁰ ("then Dryas himself fell (amazing!), never aware of the blow: who threw the weapon and why will be clear [to him] at some point," 9.875–6). The mysterious death of Dryas is (we have to guess) brought about by Diana, who (though forced to leave the battlefield) had promised to inflict revenge with her bow on anyone who harmed her favorite (9.663–7). Yet Statius' elliptical way of narrating Dryas' death accentuates how astonishing this turn of events is: the emphatic *ipse* and the parenthetical *mirum* should make us ponder the oddity of a giant being cut down in such strange circumstances. It all happens so quickly that paradoxically, Dryas himself is not even aware of who delivers the wound. For the unexpected manner of his death, the giant Dryas becomes a phenomenon at whom we are prompted to wonder.

Nor is he the only such figure. When Capaneus scales the walls of Thebes, apparently as a prelude to attacking heaven, Statius reinvents the hero as a giant: indeed, a giant is appropriately and proleptically depicted on Capaneus' helmet (4.175–6).³¹ In a move which trumps Vergil's Mezentius (the notorious *contemptor diuum*, "scornor of the gods," *Aen.* 7.648), Capaneus infamously utters a direct challenge to Jupiter. At this extraordinary moment of hubris Statius compares him with the giants: *Stygias rupisse catenas / Iapetum aut uinctam supera ad conuexa leuari / Inarimen Aetnamue putes* ("you would think that Iapetus had broken his Stygian chains or that Inarime or Aetna had been bound and lifted to the heavens above," 10.915–17). Jupiter's predictable response is to blast the mighty Capaneus with his lightning-bolt, shattering the boundary-breaking giant in an explosion of violence (thereby uncomfortably reminding us that the gods could have stopped the fighting at any stage, but chose not to do so). Here again we are given a shocking and unexpected divine intervention, which brings about a giant's death. It is as if Statius is piling up scenes in his epic which explain how the earth later discharges the extraordinary sorts of huge bones which regularly attract the paradoxographers (and others).

More generally, Statius effectively deploys the theme of amazement experienced by characters within his narrative, whether through the dying Eryx, astonished at the path of the spear which kills him (*miratur moriens*, "he dies

30 Hill prints the variant *patebant*; see Dewar (1991) *ad loc.* for a defense of *patebunt*.

31 On Capaneus, see Criado (2000) 107–10; McNelis (2007) 140–5; and Ganiban (2007) 145–8.

in amazement," 9.131), or through Hippomedon, faced with the river Ismenos suddenly rising in spate after he has killed Ismenos' grandson (*miratur creuisse uadum seseque minorem*, "he wonders that the water had increased and he had grown smaller," 9.458),³² or through Antheus, killed by a spear when driving around the walls of Thebes, but held in position on the chariot by his own greaves (*mirandum uisu belli scelus*, "the wickedness of war is remarkable to see," 10.548). In Statius' hands, battle narratives become masterpieces of paradox and display, where even the participants themselves are caught by surprise at how events (including their own deaths) unfold. This theme of wonderment culminates during the single-combat of Polynices and Eteocles, when the Furies look on: *tantum mirantur et astant / laudantes, hominumque dolent plus posse furores* ("they only marveled and stood by, full of praise, but sorry that the madness of men was more powerful than their own," 11.537–8). Statius' Furies, Tisiphone and Megaera, have finally been outdone by human *furor* and they too are reduced to a state of awe by what they see.

Statius is also highly adept at bringing his battles to life by his descriptive powers of scene-setting. One particularly vivid example is when he depicts the collective clash between the two armies in a rich and witty passage, which embraces paradox, *uariatio*, allusion, and hyperbole:

excludere diem *telis*, stant *ferrea* caelo
nubila, nec *iaculis* artatus sufficit aer.
 hi pereunt missis, illi redeuntibus *hastis*,
 concurrunt per inane *sudes* et mutua perdunt
 uulnera, concurrunt *hastae*, stridentia funda
saxa pluunt, *uolucres* imitantur fulgura *glandes*
 et *formidandae* non una morte *sagittae*.

THEB. 8.412–18

They have shut out the daylight with their weapons, iron clouds hang in the sky, nor does the constricted air have enough room for the javelins. Some die from spears hurled, others die from spears thrown back, stakes clash together in the void and dissipate each other's wounds, spears clash together, hissing stones rain from slings, flying missiles and arrows dreaded not just for one kind of death resemble lightning-bolts."

The sheer scale of the battle is vividly suggested by the opening picture of daylight being completely shut out by the weapons, so many of which are being

32 As Dewar (1991) 147 notes, the chiasmus is a nice touch here.

thrown that they do not even have room to move. Intensity throughout is added by asyndeton and the predominance of verbs in the present tense. The opening hyperbole about the weapons shutting out the daylight is then given a flash of color through the intriguing metaphor of "iron clouds" (*ferrea . . . nubila*, 412–13, a combination unique to Statius) to designate the weapons in the air. This meteorological image introduces the idea of the natural world, which will be picked up subsequently, first by the Lucretian term *inane* ("void," 415, itself a variant after *caelum* and *aer*) and second by the metaphorical verb *pluuunt* ("rain") and the comparison of the missiles with *fulgura* ("lightning-bolts," 417). In an amusing mismatch, the diction of *inane* momentarily casts the ungainly stakes as tiny Lucretian atoms, crashing and leaping apart.³³ The notion that they dissipate each other's wounds by colliding in mid-air is paradoxical and attention-grabbing: *uulnera* (416, accentuated by enjambment) suggests the "prospective wounds residing in missiles" (*OLD* 1c *uulnus*), a use first found in Vergil.³⁴ There are other elegant touches too. The colorful *uariatio* in terminology to describe weapons (eight different terms in seven lines) sits alongside pointed gemination of verbs (*concurrunt . . . concurrunt*, 415–16) suggesting the repetitiveness of the mutual destruction.³⁵ That is already implied in the endless to-ing and fro-ing of the weapons hurled back and forth between the two sides (*hi . . . illi*, 414). We can see too how Statius in positioning *saxa* ("stones," 417) at the start of the next line beneath *funda* ("slings," 416) mirrors the concept being described in the Latin. Moreover, the detail that the arrows are to be dreaded *non una morte* ("not just for one kind of death," 418, presumably indicating that they have poisoned tips as well as being sharp) also serves as a kind of summary for the heterogeneous rain of all the different weapons described in the preceding lines. This vivid and engaging passage from a battle scene is only one of many which repay close analysis for evidence of Statius' creativity. As Newlands observes, encapsulating the nature of Statius' style: he "is both bold and nuanced in his use of diction, showing a fondness for striking

33 Cf. Lucr. 1.384–6 on the role of *inane* when two objects clash into each other. At 1.968–83, Lucretius memorably uses the question of what happens to a spear thrown from the edge of the universe to demonstrate that the universe is infinite and without boundaries. Statius knew his Lucretius well: see, for example, the list of entries in Newlands (201b) 277, "Lucretius, echoes of/allusions to." Vergil also has *inane* for sky (*OLD* 1a): *Aen.* 12.354, 906.

34 Harrison (1991) 98.

35 See Wills (1996) 194–202 on battle polyptoton.

metaphors, frequent wordplay . . . , paradox and oxymora, and mythological and literary allusions.”³⁶ His descriptions of battle are no exception.

Statius' Battles and Domitian

The question of how Statius' epic relates to the Domitianic cultural milieu in which it was written has naturally provoked a lively and nuanced scholarly debate.³⁷ That Statius was deeply engaged with his contemporary world, despite his apparently distant Greek mythological theme, is suggested by various factors, not least of all one extraordinary simile relating to recent political events of his own time. This involves comparing Thiodamas' hesitation about succeeding his father Amphiarius with the worries of a young Achaemenid prince assuming the kingship after his father's death (8.286–93).³⁸ More generally in the *Thebaid*, Statius' claustrophobic military clashes form a peculiarly grim and expressive focal point for thinking broadly about the moral degradation wrought by civil war. That should come as no surprise, since Statius (born c. 50 CE) had seen for himself the destructive impact of internal conflict in an imperial context in the civil wars of 69 CE; and his own father had written a poem about this latest period of self-destruction (cf. *Silv.* 5.3.195–204).³⁹ We should remember too that his contemporary audience would have also had their responses to the epic shaped by such experiences. As Henderson suggests, “Flavian subjects . . . could scarcely resist reading into their ‘Thebes’ that post-Lucanian tragedy of the Caesars of 69 CE.”⁴⁰

If we are right to see the *Thebaid* as informed by the most recent civil wars to grip Rome, then we might expect to see some cross-fertilization between

36 Newlands (2011b) 23.

37 Ahl (1986) is central, with Henderson (1991); Dominik (1994b) 130–80; Ripoll (1998a); Delarue (2000); Braund (2006); and McNelis (2007). Not all scholars accept that the epic is engaged with contemporary Rome: Dominik (1994b) 131–3 assembles such views, but robustly argues against them. Statius probably finished the *Thebaid*, which supposedly took twelve years to write (*Theb.* 12.811–12), by 93 CE, since there is no mention of Domitian's defeat of the Sarmatians in January 93. Absolute precision is elusive, but it is certainly Domitianic. See Gibson (2006) xvii–xviii.

38 Hollis (1994) stresses how special this simile is for its Parthian focalization and the topicality of the *puer* who should be identified as the new incumbent to the Parthian throne, Pacorus II, whose earliest coinage dates to 78 CE, and whose father was the highly competent Vologaeses I (c. 51–78 CE).

39 Gibson (2006) 342–5.

40 Henderson (1998b) 220.

the poem's narrative mode and accounts of that conflict in 69 CE.⁴¹ There are indeed instances where the fictionalized world of the epic overlaps with episodes from recent history. For example, we have already discussed the disturbing *envoi* of Tydeus, gloating over Melanippus' severed head and then grotesquely chewing on the brains (8.751–66). This seems to be a composite of two episodes narrated by Tacitus in the *Histories* (written c. 109 CE after the *Thebaid*, but our most detailed source for the year of the four emperors). One involves the victorious Otho, gazing with relish at the severed head of his dead rival Piso: *nullam caedem Otho maiore laetitia excepisse, nullum caput tam insatiabilis oculis perlustrasse dicitur* ("it is said that Otho welcomed no death with greater happiness, scrutinized no head with such insatiable eyes," *Hist.* 1.44.1). Compare Tydeus: *spectat atrox hostile caput, gliscitque tepentis / lumina torua uidens et adhuc dubitantia figi. / infelix contentus erat* ("He looked at his enemy's fierce head and was elated, seeing that the wild eyes of the warm man were fixed but still flickering. The wretch was content," *Theb.* 8.755–7).⁴² Later in the *Histories*, we have a second episode, where Curtius Montanus accuses Aquilius Regulus of biting Piso's severed head: *adpetitum morsu Pisonis caput* ("Piso's head was assailed with biting," *Hist.* 4.42.5). That again recalls the cannibalistic Tydeus: *illum effracti perfusum tabe cerebri* ("the man drenched in dripping foulness of the shattered brain," *Theb.* 8.760). Now, abusive accounts of maltreating severed heads in a civil war context are not rare in ancient literature, so it is not possible to argue conclusively that Statius was thinking specifically of Piso's severed head when he was writing about the death of Tydeus.⁴³ Nonetheless, this point of contact between Statius' epic world and memories of a real civil war is tangible, breaking down the idea that the *Thebaid* exists in isolation from its recent historical context. Nor is it an isolated example. Another curious point of contact between the fictionalized and real civil wars is Statius' account of the suicide of Maeon when bringing news to Eteocles that his party of ambushers has been wiped out by Tydeus (3.81–95). This response recalls a memorable scene from the civil wars in 69 CE where the soldier bringing news of defeat to Otho (Suet. *Otho* 10.1, Plut. *O.* 15.3, Dio 64.11) or to Vitellius (Tac. *Hist.* 3.54) kills himself in exemplary fashion in order to validate news of the defeat.⁴⁴ Real life and poetic fiction once again seem to interact. Indeed, it is entirely possible that Tacitus (in narrating the fate of Piso's head and the

41 On the fruitful interaction between poetry and historiography more generally, see Foucher (2000); Levene and Nelis (2002); and Miller and Woodman (2010).

42 Keitel (2007) discusses the motif of the tyrannical gaze.

43 See Ash (1997) on severed heads in civil war.

44 Dominik (1994b) 154–6 sees Maeon's suicide as heavily infused with Stoicism, and compares Thræsea Paetus.

soldier's suicide) was actively engaging with the *Thebaid* at such moments: Statius was, after all, the major epic poet of this time, and the boundary between historiography and epic was notoriously permeable.

Not only the civil wars of 69 CE which heralded the arrival of the Flavian dynasty, but also Domitian's own subsequent foreign campaigns against the Germans and the Dacians may lurk beneath the surface of this epic.⁴⁵ Statius famously defers narrating these imperial campaigns (1.17–31),⁴⁶ but he does so in aggrandizing and panegyric language which distances them (almost fictionalizes them) in contrast with the bloody and tangible face of self-destructive warfare in the *Thebaid* from which it is impossible to escape. Indeed, a striking paradox of Statius' poem is that the internal dynamics of battle in the supposedly distant, stylized, and mythical world of epic show a relevance, vividness, and realism which hit home in comparison with the elusive realm of Domitian's own military campaigns taking place in the external sphere. It is hard to resist the idea that for Statius' contemporary Flavian audience, the model of civil war fought on Italian soil has a relevance and meaning which far outweighs any elusive imperial campaigns fought abroad. These conflicts may be a vehicle for Domitian as *princeps* to try to lay claim to *uirtus* in the eyes of posterity, but that particular pathway to *uirtus* will remain out of reach for most men. It is intriguing that this sense in Statius of these real campaigns having a fictionalized feel will be pushed to a new level after the end of the Flavian dynasty, when hostile writers cast Domitian's war against the Chatti as totally faked, with slaves even bought to participate in his "triumph" as captured Germans and having their hair dyed so as to look the part (Tac. *Agr.* 39.1, Plin. *Pan.* 16.3).⁴⁷ Masterson has suggested that "the *Thebaid* was potentially available to be read as calling into question the masculinity of contemporary Roman men."⁴⁸ This is true up to a point, but what the *Thebaid* really stresses is the disjuncture between pathways to *uirtus*: a serving *princeps* may be able to fight campaigns abroad, but for most Roman aristocrats, civil war is a far more likely sphere in which they will see military action.⁴⁹

45 *Silv.* 4.2.66 suggests that Statius had sung about Domitian's German and Dacian campaigns, possibly as a victor in the Alban games at some point between 90 and 92 (Coleman [1988] xvii). We have four lines from a lost work, the *De Bello Germanico*. See further Dominik (1994b) 170–1.

46 Cf. Pagán, pp. 374–6 in this volume.

47 See Rives (1999) 30–1, 281–2.

48 Masterson (2005) 290.

49 On the cyclical nature of civil war, see the essays in Breed *et al.* (2010) 105–56. I would like to thank Tim Rood for kindly discussing with me my idea that Statius at the end of *Thebaid* 4 might be engaging with Xenophon.

Parent-Child Conflict in the *Thebaid*

Kyle Gervais

Statius' *Thebaid* promises fraternal conflict (*fraternas acies*, 1.1), but in the first scene after the proem, Oedipus (who killed his father and married his mother)¹ curses his sons (46–87). In the next part of the book, the scene changes to Olympus, where Jupiter resolves to punish Argos and Thebes, two races of his descendants (*quis sanguinis auctor / ipse ego*, “whose bloodline I myself began,” 224–5). After these extraordinary scenes—a pair of fathers desiring the extinction of their own bloodlines—the setting shifts to Argos and the poem's third major father, Adrastus. Here, Statius steps away from the world of his epic for the first of two long inset narratives: Adrastus' tale of Linus and Coroebus (1.557–668) and Hypsipyle's tale of the Lemnian massacre (5.17–498).² These episodes are separated from the main narrative in time (ancient Argos) or space (the island of Lemnos), but they too are concerned with parent-child strife.

I begin by reading the episodes through to show that a controlling theme is the destruction of parent-child bonds: dangerous offspring, cruel or negligent parents, and, everywhere, children dying.³ I end by suggesting that these two extended meditations on parent-child relationships are important because, in the final lines of his epic (12.810–19)—effectively a tiny third inset

1 These deeds have left their scars: as Hypsipyle is obsessed with “The Name of the Father” (see below, p. 230), so Oedipus has “father” and “mother” on his mind (*matre*, 1.60; *patrem*, 66; *matris*, 68; *matre*, 72).

2 On the Linus and Coroebus episode: Legras (1905a) 38–9; Heuvel (1932) 243–65; Aricò (1960); Vessey (1970b, reproduced in [1973] 101–7); Caviglia (1973a) 22–6, 149–63; Ahl (1986) 2853–6; Kytzler (1986); Hill (1990) 113–15; Brown (1994) 164–87; Dominik (1994b) 63–70; Ripoll (1998a) 303–4; Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 376–82; Delarue (2000) 121–3, 317–18; Ganiban (2007) 9–23; McNelis (2007) 25–49; Coffee (2009b) 215–17. On the Lemnian episode: Legras (1905a) 61–9; Aricò (1961); Vessey (1970a, largely reproduced in [1973] 170–87); Ahl (1986) 2886–7; Brown (1994) 117–23 *et passim*; Dominik (1994b) 54–63, (1997a); Gruzeliér (1994); Frings (1996); Kytzler (1996); Nugent (1996); Delarue (2000) 130–3, 316–7, 333–7; Casali (2003); Gibson (2004); Ganiban (2007) 71–95; Coffee (2009b) 200–4; Augoustakis (2010b) 34–62.

3 Bernstein, pp. 139–54 in this volume offers a more general examination of troubled kinship bonds in the *Thebaid*.

narrative—Statius figures the *Thebaid* as a child, and himself as its father.⁴ This metapoetic parent-child relationship is no different from those in the two longer inset narratives: as Statius sends his poem out into the world, he does not know whether to pray for its survival, or wish for its death.

Adrastus' Tale

First, Apollo slays the Python. The language points to Ovid's version in *Metamorphoses* 1.⁵ Of particular interest is Ovid's description of the serpent's birth:

illa quidem nollet, sed te quoque, maxime Python,
tum genuit.

OV. *MET.* 1.438–9

And although the Earth would not have wished it, at that time she bore you too, giant Python.

To summarize this, Statius offers *terrigenam Pythona* ("earthborn Python," *Theb.* 1.563, a phrase unique in Latin literature), reminding us that the monstrous serpent is nevertheless a child of Earth, albeit a horrible one that she would have rather not born (a detail unique to Ovid). Python, then, is the first in a series of harmful offspring that will bring grief and die (or die and bring grief) in Adrastus' narrative.⁶

4 On these lines: Vessey (1986a) 2974–6; Malamud (1995) 24–7; Braund (1996a) 7–8; Nugent (1996) 70–1; Dietrich (1999) 50; Pagán (2000) 444–6; Dominik (1994b) 173–5, (2003); Pollmann (2004) 284–9; Leigh (2006) 223–5; McNelis (2007) 22–3.

5 Verbal links between *Met.* 1.436–44 and *Theb.* 1.562–71: *edidit/perdidit* ~ *dedit*, *innumeras* ~ *numerosa*, *noua/nouis* ~ *noua*, *monstra* ~ *monstri*, *deus*, *telis*, *perdidit* ~ *perculit/perquirens*, *uulnera*, *nigra ueneno* ~ *nigro... ueneno*. Cf. also *Met.* 1.459–60 (*pestifero tot iugera uentre prementem* / *strauimus innumeris tumidum Pythona sagittis*), with *Theb.* 1.564 (*squamisque annosa terentem* / *robora*), 567 (*absumptis numerosa in uulnera telis*), and 568 (*centum per iugera campi*). Cf. McNelis (2007) 29–30.

6 Statius also alludes to Luc. 5.79–81 (*ultor ibi expulsa, premeret cum uiscera partus, / matris adhuc rudibus Paeon Pythona sagittis* / *explicit*), "there, avenging his mother who had been chased away when her babies were burdening her womb, Paeon stretched Python out with still unpracticed arrows"; cf. *Theb.* 1.568–9: *dedit* [Apollo Pythona] *centum per iugera campi / uix tandem explicitum*). A subtle reminder that Apollo was avenging his mother's mistreatment by Python: one child kills another.

The next is Crotopus' unnamed daughter. We supply the name Psamathe from other sources (Lact. *ad Theb.* 1.570; Paus. 1.43.7–8, 2.19.8), but Statius' elision does more than test his audience's *doctrina*. It also emphasizes Psamathe's relationships with her father (*huic...pios seruabat nata penates*, "he had a daughter who dwelt piously at home," *Theb.* 1.571–2; cf. *pater*, "father," 579; *genitorque*, "sire," 591; *patri*, "father," 594; Psamathe's son, Linus, is similarly unnamed). Her rape by Apollo again looks to Ovid. In both poems Apollo slays the Python and then pursues a virgin, but Statius' god succeeds where Ovid's fails and, while Daphne becomes a laurel tree by the banks of the river Peneus (*Peneidas undas*, *Met.* 1.544), Psamathe is raped by the banks of the Langia (*Nemeaei ad fluminis undam*, *Theb.* 1.575) and becomes pregnant. Like Ovid's Earth, she bears a child that will bear grief, to herself (esp. *Theb.* 1.573–4), her father, and Argos.

She gives birth *bis quinos plena cum fronte resumeret orbes* / *Cynthia* ("when Cynthia was waxing full her tenth orb," 1.576–7) to *sidereum Latonae... nepotem* ("Latona's starry grandson," 577): at the moment of his son's birth, we are reminded of Apollo's sister and mother—but Apollo himself is absent. Without help from the divine father, and fearing punishment from her own father, Psamathe hides her child with a "mountain-wandering shepherd" (*montiuago pecoris custodi*, 581). In an epic about the *Oedipodae confusa domus* ("confused house of Oedipus," 1.17), this cannot help but recall the exposure of the baby Oedipus on Mount Cithaeron by shepherds, thereby tainting the pathetic story of helpless Psamathe and innocent, doomed Linus with the quintessential dysfunctional family of the *Thebaid*.⁷ In turn, Psamathe's relationship with Crotopus recalls that of Adrastus and his daughters,⁸ and so Crotopus' execution of his daughter taints Adrastus himself: Adrastus has carefully controlled his daughters' virginity in accordance with an Apolline oracle, and we wonder how he would have reacted had one of *his* daughters been raped. In any case, both kings' daughters are involved in the ruin of their fathers' realms.

The ruin of Crotopus' Argos begins after the deaths of Linus and Psamathe, when Apollo summons an avenger from the underworld (nameless—again—in Statius, called Poine elsewhere). Like Python, Poine is not only a *monstrum*, but somebody's child: *monstrum infandis Acheronte sub imo* / *conceptum Eumenidum thalamis* ("a monster conceived by an abominable union with the

7 Cf. Ahl (1986) 2854, who also notes that Adrastus' story features a Sphinx-like monster and a plague. Vessey (1973) 107 connects Coroebus with Oedipus, slayer of the Sphinx.

8 Cf. Vessey (1970b) 323–4.

Eumenides in the depths of Acheron," 1.597–8).⁹ She terrorizes Argos, devouring infants (602): Apollo has already avenged the persecution of his mother by killing a child of Earth; now he avenges the deaths of his own child and its mother, Crotopus' child, by summoning a child of hell to kill the children of Argos.¹⁰

But Poine does not simply reveal Apollo's bad character. Word repetition suggests that she is, in fact, a horrific reincarnation of both Psamathe and Linus. Poine's summons immediately follows Psamathe's death:

uacuumque ferens uelamine *pectus*
 occurrit confessa patri; nec motus et atro
 imperat (*infandum!*) cupientem occumbere leto.
 sero memor *thalami* maestae solacia morti,
 Phoebe, paras monstrum *infandis* Acheronte sub imo
 conceptum Eumenidum *thalamis*, cui uirginis ora
pectoraque.

THEB. 1.593–9

Showing her breast bared of its covering she meets her father and confesses. But he is unmoved. He orders what she wants (abominable!): to die a black death. Remembering too late your union, Phoebus, as a sad solace for death, you prepare a monster conceived by an abominable union with the Eumenides in the depths of Acheron. It had a maiden's face and breasts.

Psamathe's execution is *infandum* (595) and after it Apollo, *sero memor thalami* (596), summons Poine, who was conceived *infandis* . . . *Eumenidum thalamis* (597–8). Psamathe meets her death with a mourning mother's bared breast (*uacuumque* . . . *uelamine pectus*, 593); her avenger rises from the underworld with the face and breast of a maiden (*uirginis ora* / *pectoraque*, 598–9).¹¹ As for Linus, "the dire madness of dogs" (*dira canum rabies*, 589) "chews him up with bloody bites" (*morsu depasta cruento*, 589). As a solace for this sad death (*maestae solacia morti*, 596), Apollo summons his monster, which subjects infants to Linus' fate, "eating them up with bloody bites" (*morsuque cruento* /

9 The father is unnamed. Apollo is an obvious, if disturbing, candidate, his true efforts lurking behind a euphemism: *Phoebe, paras monstrum* ("Phoebus, you prepare? obtain? a monster," 1.597).

10 For the injustice of Apollo here, cf. Ahl (1986) 2854 and Dominik (1994b) 64, 66–7.

11 The monster's virginal appearance also recalls Psamathe, whom Apollo deflowered (Ahl [1986] 2853).

deuesci, 603–4). The monster in turn is killed and its corpse is so horrible that it drives off carrion birds, wolves, and the animals that killed Linus: “the mad power of dogs” (*rabidamque canum uim*, 625).¹² But the Argive people take their vengeance on the corpse, mutilating the body in an act, however, that provides mere “empty solace for sorrow” (*solacia uana dolori*, 621). Thus, in Poine, child of the Furies, the innocence of Psamathe and Linus is reborn as a fearsome monster.

Monsters must be slain. It is the hero Coroebus who does the job, bringing to mind Apollo’s archetypal monster-slaying from the beginning of the narrative.¹³ But, after Apollo has taken revenge for the death of Poine by loosing a plague on Argos (like Poine, it kills children),¹⁴ Coroebus confronts his divine analogue in a scene linked to Psamathe’s confrontation with her father by word and sound repetition:

uacuumque *ferens* uelamine pectus
occurrit confessa patri; nec motus et atro
 imperat (infandum!) cupientem *occumbere leto*.

THEB. 1.593–5

Showing her breast bared of its covering she meets her father and confesses. But he is unmoved. He orders what she wants (abominable!): to die a black death.

non tu pia¹⁵ degener arma
occulis aut certae trepidas *occurrere morti*.
 comminus ora *ferens* Cirrhaei in limine templi
 constitit.

THEB. 1.639–42

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- 12 Statius’ lines evoke Lucan’s description of the effect of Erictho, but the dogs are an added detail (*impastae fugistis aues, rabidamque canum uim / oraque sicca ferunt trepidorum inhiasse luporum*, “you fled, birds, unfed, and the mad power of dogs and mouths of trembling wolves, they say, gaped dry,” *Theb.* 1.625–6; *continuo fugere lupi, fugere reuolsis / unguibus impastae uolucres*, “wolves fled immediately, and vultures tore their claws [from the corpse] and fled, unfed,” 6.627–8).
- 13 Noted in passing by Hill (1990) 114–15. Note similar verbs in the two accounts of monster slaying: *perculit* (1.567) ~ *obtulit* (608); *dedit* (568) ~ *condidit* (614), *reddit* (616).
- 14 Statius is not explicit (*labuntur dulces animae*, “sweet lives perish,” 1.632). Of the two previous instances of the phrase *dulces animae*—both describing plagues—one refers to dying calves (Verg. *G.* 3.494–5), the other to humans in general (*Aen.* 3.140).
- 15 Coroebus shares with Psamathe the distinction of *pietas*: *pios seruabat . . . penates* (“she dwelt in a pious home,” 1.572); cf. *mea . . . pietas* (“my piety,” 644).

You (Coroebus) do not basely conceal your pious weapons or fear to meet certain death. Showing your face up close, you stood on the threshold of the temple at Cirrha.

As a monster slayer, Coroebus joins the ranks of Perseus, Jason, Theseus, Hercules, and (in this tale) Apollo. But whereas all of those heroes have famous parents,¹⁶ Coroebus' parents are unknown. This absence is conspicuous in a tale where every other (usually unnamed) character has a parent explicitly named.¹⁷ The links between Psamathe's confrontation with her father and Coroebus' with Apollo thus invite us to fill this gap by figuring the hero as Apollo's (symbolic) son, who upbraids his "father" for cruelty and demands his own death, just as father Crotopus granted death to the willing Psamathe (1.595). This intratextual reading finds intertextual support: turning for a third time to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we find that after the Python and Daphne episodes Apollo appears next in his aspect as Phoebus, whose son Phaethon confronts and upbraids his divine father and demands, however unwittingly, his own death (*Met.* 1.750–2.366). Significantly, the episode is motivated by Phaethon's doubts about his paternity. If Coroebus' true parentage must remain in doubt (unlike Phaethon's), at least, unlike Phaethon (and indeed unlike Psamathe), Coroebus survives the encounter with his divine "father." I will revisit this unexpected *clementia* of Apollo at the end of the chapter.

Hypsipyle's Tale

Hypsipyle—like Psamathe—is defined largely by her relationship with her father,¹⁸ whom she first hints at (*et nobis regnum tamen et pater ingens— / sed quid ego haec?*, "and yet my kingdom and mighty father—but why do I go on like this?", 4.780–1)¹⁹ and then, after Adrastus takes the bait (*dic quis et ille pater*, "and say who the father is you spoke of," 5.25), reveals explicitly: *hoc memorasse sat est: claro generata Thoante / seruitium Hypsipyle uestri fero capta Lycurgi* ("it is enough to say this: child of famous Thoas, I, Hypsipyle, endure captive

16 In particular, Hercules' slaying of Cacus is a model for Coroebus' slaying of Poiné (Ganiban [2007] 13–15; McNelis [2007] 27–9); Hercules enters Evander's tale not under his own name, but with the impressive patronym *Amphitryoniades* (Verg. *Aen.* 8.214).

17 Except Crotopus, who instead is father to Psamathe.

18 Here I follow Nugent (1996) 53–4.

19 The aposiopesis suppresses Thoas' name, generating suspense, but also emphasizing the father-daughter relationship (as did the suppression of Psamathe's name in book 1).

servitude under your Lycurgus," 5.38–9).²⁰ The language of this revelation recalls the last scene in which Adrastus asked for someone's identity, where Polynices responded: *Cadmus origo patrum, tellus Mauortia Thebe, / est genetrix Iocasta mihi* ("my forefathers descended from Cadmus, Mars' Thebes is my country, Jocasta my mother," 1.680–1). Hypsipyle proudly reveals what Polynices carefully conceals, and on the face of it Statius presents Hypsipyle and Thoas as worthy successors to Aeneas and Anchises, as the antithesis of Polynices' poisoned filial bonds.²¹ As we shall see, Hypsipyle's relationship with her father is not so straightforward, but in revealing her parentage she does manage to further pique Adrastus' interest. He urges Hypsipyle to tell her story: *pater ante alios hortatur Adrastus* ("ahead of the others father Adrastus urges," 5.42). If we press *pater* a little we find that Adrastus is so eager precisely because he *is* a father: if Crotopus and Psamathe were a nightmare version of Adrastus and his daughters, perhaps Thoas and Hypsipyle will be a positive vision of father-daughter love.

If so, they will be the only example of parent-child harmony on Lemnos. After Venus has spoiled the marriages on Lemnos, and when the men sail to campaign in Thrace, they choose war over children: *cumque domus contra stantesque in litore nati, / dulcius . . .* ("and although their homes stood opposite them, and their sons on the shore, it was sweeter to . . .," 5.77–8). Lemnos lies emasculated for two years, until *aeui matura Polyxo* ("aged Polyxo," 90), driven mad as a Maenad (90–4), calls the Lemnian women to conference. The scene is modeled on an episode in Vergil's *Aeneid* 5, where Iris disguises herself and incites the Trojan women to burn their ships.²² The goddess' disguise is *Beroe, Tmarii coniunx longaeua Dorycli, / cui genus et quondam nomen natique fuissent* ("Beroe, long-lived wife of Tmarian Doryclus, who once possessed race and name and sons," *Aen.* 5.620–1). This Beroe lost her sons in the Trojan War; Polyxo and her family were not so lucky. Instead, her four young sons follow her to the meeting place: *infelix comitatus eunti / haerebant nati* ("her sons clung to her, a luckless retinue to her procession," *Theb.* 5.98–9; cf. 125).

There Polyxo bemoans the misfortune of the Lemnian women, who have been deprived, first, of sex (5.112–14) and, second, of new children (114–16). Her solution, illogically, is to wait for the soldiers to return from Thrace and then

20 But only after further hinting (*pater*, 5.34; *parentem*, 35).

21 The Lemnian episode is broadly modeled on Aeneas' narrative in *Aeneid* 2 (Nugent [1996] 47–52; Ganiban [2007] 71–95), just as the Coroebus episode is broadly modeled on the Hercules-Cacus episode in *Aeneid* 8 (Ganiban [2007] 13–15; McNelis [2007] 27–9, with references).

22 Cf. Nugent (1996) 59 n. 28 and Gervais (2008) 66 n. 60.

kill every man on the island—father, husband, or son (148–51). In her speech she invokes the Danaids and Procne as exemplars (117–22): the Danaids daughters co-opted by their father (*pater*, 118) to hurt his brother,²³ Procne a mother who killed her son to hurt her husband. To trump these two instances of parental exploitation, Polyxo makes a bloody vow:

quattuor hos una, decus et solacia patris,
in gremio (licet amplexu lacrimisque morentur)
transadigam ferro saniemque et uulnera fratrum
miscebo patremque super spirantibus addam.

THEB. 5.125–8

These four boys together, their father's pride and joy, sitting in my lap, delaying me with hugs and tears, I shall run through with a blade, and mix the gory wounds of the brothers, and put their father on their still-breathing bodies.

We are privy to only one of the promised deaths, as Polyxo offers a son for sacrifice: *natum Charopeia coniunx / obtulit* (159–60).²⁴ With his death, the massacre is sanctified, as “the newly made shade flies around his mother” (*matremque recens circumuolat umbra*, 163). The men return home, sacrifice, feast, drink, tell stories, and fall asleep. The women prepare themselves, like lionesses on the hunt:

non aliter Scythicos armenta per agros
Hyrcaenae clausere leae quas exigit ortu
prima fames, auidique inplorant ubera nati.

THEB. 5.203–5

Not otherwise do Hyrcanian lionesses close in on a herd in Scythian lands. Morning hunger has made them rise; their greedy cubs cry for their udders.

23 Cf. Marinis, pp. 346–7 in this volume on the crime of Danaus as an analogue for Oedipus' curse against his sons in the *Thebaid*.

24 But Hypsipyle does see a version of Polyxo's nightmarish vow as she wanders through the remains of the massacre: half-dead boys lying—and expiring—on their fathers' faces (5.259–61).

As often in the *Thebaid*, the simile is pointedly dissimilar to its tenor: the lionesses kill to feed their children, but the Lemnians will, simply, kill their children.

And so they do. Of the seven individual victims of the massacre, four are explicitly sons: Cydon and Crenaeus,²⁵ sons of Hypsipyle's father (*quibus ubera mecum / obliquumque a patre genus*, 221–2);²⁶ Epopeus, a baby stabbed to death by his own savage mother (*barbara . . . fodiebat Epopea mater*, 225);²⁷ and Cydimon, whose sister hesitates to kill him, until their *saeua parens* ("fierce mother," 229) provides the impetus and the sword. But it is the final death of the narrated massacre that catches Hypsipyle's—and perhaps Adrastus'—attention:

ut uero Alcimeden etiamnum in murmure truncos
ferre patris uultus et egentem sanguinis ensem
conspexi, rigueret comae atque in uiscera saeuus
horror iit: meus ille Thoas, mea dira uideri
dextra mihi! extemplo thalamis turbata paternis
inferor.

THEB. 5.236–41

But when I caught sight of Alcimede carrying her father's severed, still murmuring head and a sword in need of blood, my hair stood on end and a fierce quaking swept through my insides: he seemed to me to be my Thoas, the dire right hand seemed my own! Immediately I find myself in my father's chambers, all confused.

The scene is modeled on the sight of Priam's death in *Aeneid* 2, which stirs up in Aeneas a vague image of his own father and family (*Aen.* 2.560–3),²⁸ but

25 Crenaeus' intertextual antecedent is found at V. Fl. 3.177–8: *quem te qualemque uidebit / attonitus, Crenaeae, parens!* ("in what a state will your stunned father see you, Crenaeus!"). Statius will greatly elaborate on this theme of parental bereavement in book 9, where a third Crenaeus is mourned first by his mother, then by his grandfather (9.351–445).

26 The language is difficult, but seems to indicate foster brothers, nursed by Hypsipyle's mother, born of a different father (L&S s.v. *obliquus* IIA are incorrect here).

27 Epopeus is the leader of the sailors turned into dolphins by Bacchus at Ov. *Met.* 3.619, and thus an appropriate name for a member of Thoas' Bacchic house. But the juxtaposition *Epopea mater* also recalls the *Epopeus pater* who raped his daughter Nyctimene, resulting in her transformation into an owl by Minerva (Ov. *Met.* 2.589–95, Hyg. *Fab.* 204).

28 Ganiban (2007) 80–2. Cf. *truncus* ~ *truncos* (*Aen.* 2.557 and *Theb.* 5.236–7, both line-ending), *saeuus circumstetit horror* ~ *in uiscera saeuus / horror iit* (2.559 and 5.238–9).

Hypsipyle has a much more specific vision. Aeneas substitutes his father for Priam; Hypsipyle substitutes her father for Alcimedē's and, for Alcimedē, *herself*. For a moment, Hypsipyle—savior of her father, heir to *pius Aeneas*, counterexample to Oedipus and sons—imagines herself a patricide. And suddenly, mysteriously, she is in her father's room.²⁹

Hypsipyle does not kill her father. She leads him away from the house, and they meet *his* father, Bacchus (5.265–84). He reveals that Venus is punishing Lemnos with *her* father Jupiter's consent: *infandum natae concessit honorem* ("he has granted his daughter an abominable honor," 277). Venus has engineered the massacre and has lurked behind the characterizations of several important figures therein.³⁰ She is also Jupiter's daughter. As it was in Crotopus' Argos, and as it will be in Adrastus', on Lemnos a daughter plays a part in a kingdom's destruction.

But Bacchus, another child of Jupiter, seeks to counter the malevolence of his father's daughter. He tells Hypsipyle to lead her father to the shore (*rege, uirgo, patrem*, 5.279) and put him out to sea (*tu lato patrem committe profundo*, 283). She obeys ([*mari*] *commendo patrem*, 289). The next day she holds a sham funeral for him, burning his accoutrements (*sceptrum . . . armaque patris*, 314). She prays her action will not prove a bad omen to him (*cassumque parenti / omen . . . precor*, 318–19). She ascends his throne (*solio considerare patris / . . . datur*, 321–2). Scholars have argued that, if Hypsipyle did not actually kill her father, she is at least unsure of herself:³¹ there is precedent for unreliable narrators in Graeco-Roman epic; her narration has many suspicious elements; Opheltes' parents doubt her story (5.658–60, 6.149–59); and in Herodotus' version of the massacre it seems that Thoas *did* die along with the other men (Hdt. 6.138). For our purposes, it is enough to borrow one of the sub-headings (stripped of its Lacanian associations) from Nugent's seminal study: "Hypsipyle and the Name of the Father." The six-fold repetition of the name "father" (*pater/parens*) as Hypsipyle rescues, mourns, and succeeds her father emphasizes her filial bond, as the suppression of Psamathe's name did in Adrastus' tale. *Whatever* Hypsipyle's actions on Lemnos, they were the actions of a daughter towards her father.

After the massacre, Lemnos remains devastated until the arrival of the Argonauts, "great glories of their mighty fathers" (*magnorum decora alta patrum*, 5.424), who have sex with the Lemnian women and make them mothers again (462). Hypsipyle is mother to twin sons with Jason, one of whom she

29 Cf. Nugent (1996) 64.

30 Gorge, Lycaste's mother, and Hypsipyle: see Gervais (2013) 153–6.

31 Brown (1994) 117–23; Nugent (1996); Casali (2003); cf. Delarue (2000) 335–7.

names Thoas: *enitor geminos duroque sub hospite mater / nomen aui renouo* ("I give birth to twins, made a mother by an unfeeling guest, renewing the name of their grandfather, 464–5).³² We may compare her to Jocasta:³³ both mothers of twins with foreigners who arrived after the loss of a king, both with confused family ties—Jocasta a mother and wife to Oedipus, Hypsipyle a daughter and mother to "Thoas."³⁴ Like Jocasta's husband, Hypsipyle rejects his wife and sons: Jason leads the Argonauts from Lemnos, showing no regard for his children or their mother. Here Hypsipyle echoes her own words to Jason from Ovid's *Heroides*, but, whereas her Ovidian incarnation speaks merely as a *puella relicta* (*heu! ubi pacta fides?*, "Alas! Where is the faith you vowed?", *Her.* 6.41),³⁵ in Statius she speaks also as a mother: *cui non sua pignora cordi, / non promissa fides* ("he did not care about his children or his promised faith," *Theb.* 5.473–4).³⁶

In the end, the Lemnians discover that Hypsipyle rescued her father and drive her from the island. As she leaves, and her narrative draws to a close, she looks to her father one last time. She escapes from the city by the same path he had taken (*uaga litora furtim / incommitata sequor funestaque moenia linquo, / qua fuga nota patris*, "I follow the winding shore, secret and alone, and leave behind the deadly walls by the path I knew from the flight of my father," 5.494–6).

Statius' Epic Child

To examine the broader significance of the narratives of Adrastus and Hypsipyle within the *Thebaid*, I turn to the end of the epic, and suggest that Statius figures the *Thebaid* itself as a child, and himself as its father. But the relationship is strained, marked by Statius' competing desires to kill and protect his poetic

32 On this scene, see Micozzi, pp. 335–6 in this volume.

33 Cf. Korneeva (2011) 211–14. Or to Psamathe, another unwilling mother (compare *coactis . . . thalamis*, 1.578–9; *thalami . . . coacti*, 5.463) who, like Jocasta, exposed her child. The more common comparison is to Vergil's Dido (Ganiban [2007] 86–93).

34 One of Hypsipyle's sons is invariably named Euneos, the other is either Thoas, Nebrophonos, or Deipylos. Statius chose to "renew" the name of Hypsipyle's father with her son (Nugent [1996] 51).

35 Statius' Hypsipyle borrows her predecessor's words twice more: *heu ubi nunc Furiae?* (5.350), *heu ubi siderei uultus?* (613). Statius also returns to the phrase at *Silv.* 3.5.44 (*heu ubi nota fides?*).

36 *Pignora* may simply be a synonym for *promissa* ("legami e giuramenti," Micozzi [2002a] 67), but the word regularly means "children" in the *Thebaid*. *Pignora cordi* cannot mean "pledges of the heart," *pace* Nugent (1996) 67–8.

offspring. Newlands first interpreted the *Thebaid* as Statius' child,³⁷ citing the poet's letter to his wife, in which he subtly reminds her that, although she worries about her biological daughter, she shares with him a literary child:

tu procurrentia primis
carmina nostra sonis totasque in murmure noctes
aure rapis uigili; longi tu sola laboris
conscia, cumque tuis creuit mea Thebais annis.

SILV. 3.5.33–6

You catch with sleepless ear the first noises of my songs as they run forth, and whole nights of murmuring; you alone share in my long labor, and my *Thebaid* grew alongside your years.

Statius adapts the Callimachean *topos* of *agrupnia*—poetry as the product of sleepless nights³⁸—to a parental context: “the poem is like a child to the couple, to be watched over at night, that grew up as they themselves aged.”³⁹ This fully developed image from a late poem (c. 94 CE)⁴⁰ began life earlier, at the end of the *Thebaid*:

durabisne procul dominoque legere superstes,
o mihi bisenos multum uigilata per annos
Thebai? iam certe praesens tibi Fama benignum
strauit iter coepitque nouam monstrare futuris.
iam te magnanimus dignatur noscere Caesar,
Itala iam studio discit memoratque iuuentus.⁴¹
uiue, precor, nec tu diuinam Aeneida tempta,

37 Newlands (2009c) 398–400. See also Bernstein, pp. 142–3 in this volume. Vessey (1986a) 2975 n. 42 suggested that the *Thebaid* may be the offspring of *Fama*, but did not pursue the idea.

38 Pollmann (2004) 286. Cf. Callim. *Epigr.* 27 (29).4. Ovid adapts the *topos* to describe love songs sung at night (*Ars Am.* 2.285, *Fast.* 4.109).

39 Newlands (2009c) 399.

40 Shackleton Bailey (2003) 1.171.

41 I detect a reference in 12.812–15 to Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, on the child who will usher in a new Golden Age: *incipere, parue puer, risu cognoscere matrem* (*Ecl.* 4.60; cf. *coepitque, Theb.* 12.813; *noscere*, 814); *nec deus hunc mensa, dea nec dignata cubili est* (4.63; cf. *dignatur*, 12.814); *ultima Cumaei uenit iam carminis aetas; | magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo. | iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna, | iam noua progenies caelo demittitur alto* (4.4–7; cf. *iam . . . iam . . . iam*, 12.812–15; *nouam*, 813).

sed longe sequere et uestigia semper adora.
 mox, tibi si quis adhuc praetendit nubila liuor,
 occidet, et meriti post me referentur honores.

THEB. 12.810–19

Will you long endure and be read, surviving your master, O *Thebaid*, for twelve years the object of my many sleepless nights? Certainly, favoring Fame has already laid out a friendly path for you and begun to show you to future generations. Already magnanimous Caesar deigns to know you. Already Italian youths eagerly learn and recite you. Live, I pray, and do not challenge the divine *Aeneid*; rather, follow at a distance and always worship her footsteps. Soon any clouds of envy that still cover you over will perish, and after I am gone your well-earned honors will be paid.

On its own, and without the evidence of the later Statian passage, the parental image in *mihi bisseños multum uigilata annos* (“for twelve years the object of my many sleepless nights,” 811) would be all but invisible.⁴² But an Ovidian quotation five lines later (thus far unnoticed) brings the image to light. Ovid provides a general model for Statius’ self-contained epilogue (cf. *Ov. Met.* 15.871–9) and is already present in its first line, in the word *dominoque* (*Theb.* 12.810): Ovid is the *dominus* of his poetry book in *Tristia* 1.1 and 3.1, the two longest personifications of a poetic work before our Statian passage.⁴³ He will return in the *Thebaid*’s final couplet, with which Statius adds his poem to the canon of famous poets in *Amores* 1.15.⁴⁴ In between (*Theb.* 12.816), Statius quotes the first hemistich of *Fasti* 5.412: *uiue, precor, nec me, care, relinque, pater* (“live, I pray, and do not leave me, dear father”).⁴⁵ Achilles addresses the dying Chiron,

42 The most marked intertext, in fact, is a straightforward description of hard poetic labor by Cinna (11.1–4 Blänsdorf: *haec tibi Arateis multum inuigilata lucernis / carmina . . . uexi*, “I carried . . . this poem to you, labored over through many sleepless nights by the lamps of Aratus”), which points rather to a Callimachean reading (McNelis [2007] 23).

43 *Tr.* 1.1.2, 3.1.5. Hardie (1997) 157 does not mention Ovid, but compares *Hor. Ep.* 1.20, where the poet addresses his *liber* as a runaway slave.

44 Cf. esp. *Am.* 1.15.39–40: *pascitur in uiuis Liur; post fata quiescit, / cum suus ex merito quemque tuetur honos* (“envy feeds on the living; it subsides after death, when each is given the honor he has earned”). Ovid’s conclusion, *uiuam, parsque mei multa superstes erit* (“I shall live and the greater part of me will survive,” 42), appears at *Theb.* 12.810 (*dominoque legere superstes*) and 816 (*uiue, precor*). In every case, Statius changes Ovid’s claim of immortality for himself into hopes of immortality for his poem.

45 In this allusion to the young Achilles here at the end of Statius’ first epic, do we also see a hint at Statius’ next epic? Ovid writes *uiue, precor* twice more (*Ep.* 5.27, 7.63).

a father figure and poetry teacher; Statius crafts a sort of reply, from a poetic father doomed to die⁴⁶ to a child with an uncertain future:⁴⁷ *uiue, precor, nec tu . . .* Achilles is a dangerous child, as Ovid makes clear: though now he is learning poetry, someday he will kill Priam's son (*ille manus olim missuras Hectora leto / creditur in lyricis detinuisse modis*, "Chiron is believed to have occupied with lyric poetry the hands that would one day send Hector down to death," *Fast.* 5.385–6). The *Thebaid* is dangerous too, and we see Statius acknowledge this in his epilogue with a sustained allusion to Lucan, mixed in with the allusions to Ovid.⁴⁸ In a famous passage, Lucan reflects on his poetic project:

*inuidia sacrae, Caesar, ne tangere famae;
nam, siquid Latiis fas est promittere Musis,
quantum Zmyrnaei durabunt uatis honores,
uenturi me teque legent; Pharsalia nostra
uiuēt, et a nullo tenebris damnabimur aeuo.*

LUC. 9.982–6

Do not be touched, Caesar, by envy of sacred tradition; for if the Latin Muses can make promises, then as long as the honors of the bard of Smyrna [i.e., Homer] endure, men to come will read me—and you. Our Pharsalia will live, and no age will damn us to the shadows.

The first, addressed to a poplar inscribed with a love poem, is of obvious relevance to Statius' address to his poem. The second is more tantalizing: Dido prays for Aeneas to survive on his voyage to Italy, even though he has abandoned her.

46 12.810 (*dominoque . . . superstes*) and 819 (*post me*): an important difference from Statius' predecessors (Hor. *Carm.* 3.30; Ov. *Met.* 15.871–9, *Am.* 1.15; Luc. 9.980–6), who all expect to live on through their poetry.

47 The prayer in 12.816–17 is usually read through a Vergilian (not Ovidian) lens, as a reference to Creusa following Aeneas or Eurydice following Orpheus (Malamud [1995] 26–7, who suggests Lucretius as an alternative; Nugent [1996] 70; Pagán [2000] 444–6; Dominik [2003] 98–9). These are both singularly ill-omened allusions. Creusa dies. Eurydice dies—twice! Does Statius really want his poem to survive? A third husband-wife pair presents itself, no less ill-omened: Evadne had followed Capaneus into his funeral pyre in the previous scene (12.800–2), her extraordinary act narrated with an extraordinary image: *sese caris instrauerit audax / ignibus Euadne* ("bold Evadne covered herself with the beloved flames," 800–2). On the surface, the simplex verb *strauit* at 12.813 would contrast the happy beginning of the *Thebaid's* journey with the unhappy end of Evadne's. But if we remember the link between Evadne and the *Thebaid* when we reach the *Aeneid* in 816–17, we may also remember that the *Aeneid*, if Vergil had had his way, would have been burnt.

48 Dominik (2003) discusses the extraordinary density of allusion in this epilogue.

The correspondences with the *Thebaid's* epilogue are verbal (*invidia* ~ *liuor*, *fama*, *durare*, *honores*, *me teque* ~ *post me*, *legere*, *uiuere*), but the sentiment—Lucan's poetic immortality comes at the price of immortalizing a hated tyrant⁴⁹—is one with which Statius identifies.

From the beginning of the epic, Statius makes his discomfort clear. In the proem he depicts himself as attacked by poetic inspiration (*Pierius menti calor incidit*, "Pierian fire falls upon my mind," 1.3), a slave to his Muse (*unde iubetis / ire, deae?*, "where do you command me to begin, goddess?", 3–4), pursued by Hippomedon (*urget . . . turbidus Hippomedon*, "stormy Hippomedon is upon me," 43–4), and forced to narrate with grief and horror the deaths of Parthenopaeus and Capaneus (*plorandaque bella proterui / Arcados atque alio Capaneus horrore canendus*, "I must mourn the warfare of the rash Arcadian and sing with a different horror of Capaneus," 44–5). Twice, in apostrophes to Polynices, he imagines how much better it would have been had the hero died before reaching Thebes (1.428–30, 6.513–17)—he wishes, in effect, never to finish his poem. And he repeatedly delays his narrative's progress, most notably with Adrastus' tale in book 1 and the Nemean interlude in books 4–6.⁵⁰ In the latter Statius speaks through Amphiarus to wish for a never-ending sequence of delays to postpone the coming war.⁵¹

But finally the war comes and the fratricide is accomplished and Statius damns the brothers to hell, and his own poem to oblivion:

ite truces animae funestaque Tartara leto
polluite et cunctas Erebi consumite poenas!
uosque malis hominum, Stygiae, iam parcite, diuae:
omnibus in terris scelus hoc omnique sub aeuo
uiderit una dies monstrumque infame futuris
excidat et soli memorent haec proelia reges.

THEB. 11.574–9

Go, savage souls, and pollute dismal Tartarus with your deaths! Eat up all the punishments Erebus offers! And you, Stygian goddesses, spare now the evils of mankind: in every land, in every age let only one day have

49 Cf. Malamud (1995) 14.

50 For delay (*mora*) in the *Thebaid*, cf. esp. Vessey (1973) 165–7, 284; Ahl (1986) 2887; Feeney (1991) 339–40; Brown (1994) 4–29; Gilder (1997) 140–59; Ganiban (2007) 152–75; McNelis (2007) 86–8.

51 Amphiarus is one of the *Thebaid's* many poet-figures (Masterson [2005]). Note the correspondence between Statius' and Amphiarus' addresses to Apollo (4.650–3, 5.743–5).

seen such a crime; let future generations forget this infamous horror, and only kings recount these wars.

With this prayer, a powerful inversion of the traditional language of epic eulogies,⁵² Statius wishes for what Lucan could not accomplish: where Lucan acknowledges that his fame—and Caesar’s—will live on (*a nullo tenebris damnabimur aeuo*, 9.986), Statius prays for his poem’s *scelus* (i.e., the fratricide he narrates) to be forgotten, for it to happen only once in all the world and through all time (*omnique sub aevo*, 11.577).⁵³ Malamud identifies a “suicidal” voice in Lucan’s poem, “longing for its own silence,” in conflict with the desire to achieve poetic immortality.⁵⁴ In Statius the corresponding voice is filicidal, cursing the poem like Oedipus cursed his sons in book one (1.55–87). The opening of Statius’ curse echoes the opening of Oedipus’:

*ite truces animae funestaque Tartara leto
polluite et cunctas Erebi consumite poenas!*

THEB. 11.574–5

Go, savage souls, and pollute dismal Tartarus with your deaths! Eat up all the punishments Erebus offers!

*di, sontes animas angustaque Tartara poenis
qui regitis.*

THEB. 1.55–6

Gods who rule the guilty souls and Tartarus too small for all the punishments.

Against this filicidal voice Statius sets the voice of the worried father at the end of the poem, offering proof that the destruction he wished on his epic—*monstrumque infame futuris* / *excidat, et soli memorent haec proelia reges* (“let future generations forget this infamous horror, and only kings recount these wars,” 11.578–9)—has not come about: *iam certe praesens tibi Fama . . . coepitque nouam monstrare futuris.* / ... / *Itala iam studio discit memoratque iuuentus*

52 E.g., Ganiban (2007) 102 on Verg. *Aen.* 9.446–9; McNelis (2007) 148 on *Aen.* 11.24.

53 Ganiban (2007) 203–5 discusses resonances with a second Lucanian passage, the poet’s refusal to narrate the battle of Pharsalus (7.552–6), which also has important links to the *Thebaid*’s epilogue (see below, n. 56).

54 Malamud (1995) 15.

("Certainly, favoring Fame has already . . . begun to show you to future generations. . . . Already the Italian youth eagerly learns and recites you," 12.812–15).⁵⁵ But Statius' ambivalence about the survival of his poetic child is evident in the precise failure of the filicide's wish that "only kings recount these battles." Instead, the next generation of Italy is learning and reciting Statius' poem; his dangerous child is teaching the children of Rome.⁵⁶

Conclusion

What, then, is the broader significance within the *Thebaid* of the narratives of Adrastus and Hypsipyle? Simply, they offer sustained examinations of troubled parent-child relationships in an epic that is itself a problem child. As Statius wavers between worrying about the survival of his "child" and wishing for its obliteration, we recall the monster-children of Earth and the underworld, the cruelty and negligence of Crotopus and Apollo, the tragic innocence of Psamathe, Linus, and the sons of Polyxo (but the first two were reborn as Poine, the latter inaugurated a massacre!), and the savagery of Epopeus' and Cydimon's mothers and of Alcimedea, who showed Hypsipyle what it would be like to kill her father.

Against all this stand the clemency that Apollo finally shows towards his "son," Coroebus, and the *pietas* of Hypsipyle in rescuing her father.⁵⁷ But in the end, even these encouraging examples of parental and filial virtue lead to the suffering of children. Because Apollo spares Coroebus, Adrastus concludes that *sors aequa merentes / respicit* ("justice looks out for those who are deserving," 1.661–2)⁵⁸ and that *nec culpa nepotibus obstat* ("a past crime does not stand in

55 Malamud (1995) 24–5.

56 Malamud (1995) 26–7 is optimistic about Statius' didactic project. I am less sure. As *memorare* links two Statian passages, *discere* links Statius' epilogue with Lucan's refusal to narrate Pharsalus: *nullaque tantorum discat me uate malorum, / quam multum bellis liceat ciuilibus, aetas. / . . . / quidquid in hac acie gessisti, Roma, tacebo* ("let no age learn from me, a poet of such woes, how much was allowed in civil war. . . . Whatever you did in this battle, Rome, I shall not tell," 7.552–6). If Lucan will not teach Rome about civil war, can Statius do the job for Italy's youth (*Itala . . . iuuentus*)?

57 These two acts have intrinsic problems. I have discussed the uncertainty surrounding Hypsipyle's *pietas*. As for Apollo sparing Coroebus (1.661–6), Ahl (1986) 2854 doubts that it is actually *clementia* (cf. Dominik [1994b] 69), while Ganiban (2007) 15–22 calls it *clementia* but identifies the virtue as a troubling mark of autocracy.

58 On the meaning of the phrase, cf. Ganiban (2007) 19 n. 98.

the way of future generations," 690).⁵⁹ Because of *this*, he welcomes Polynices into his home, gives him his daughter, and starts a war with Thebes. Aside from all the deaths of Argive and Theban sons that it causes,⁶⁰ this war also destroys Adrastus' own daughter, Argia, who exits the narrative like Crotopus' daughter did: begging for her own death (12.456–63).⁶¹

In Hypsipyle's case, her obsessive retelling of her Lemnian tale causes the death of her nursling, Opheltes:

dum patrios casus famaеque exorsa retracto
ambitiosa meae (pietas haec magna fidesque!),
exsolui tibi, Lemne, nefas.

THEB. 5.626–8

While I in my ambition was recounting the misfortunes of my homeland and the source of my fame (piety this, and great faith!), I paid you, Lemnos, the sin I owed.

Henderson first hinted at the metapoetic potential of Opheltes' death, invoking Bennett Simon's arguments that the killing of children—the future audience for memorializing poetry—threatens "the killing of story-telling" (Simon), "the suicide of narration" (Henderson).⁶² And indeed, the death of Opheltes does entail the silencing of Hypsipyle's Lemnian narrative. Since Opheltes was her primary audience (cf. 5.615–16), his death endangers her narrative in exactly the way Simon discusses; furthermore, his death removes any *reason* for her to

59 His injunction to Polynices in the next two lines, *tu modo dissimilis rebus mereare secundis / excusare tuos* ("only may you be different in your fortunate circumstances and deserve to excuse your family," 1.691–2), links this *sententia* with the previous one (*sors aequa merentes / respicit*). Bernstein (2008) 74 connects 1.689–90 (*nostro quoque sanguine multum / errauit pietas*, "in our bloodline too piety often went astray") with Tantalus and Pelops, but Crotopus and Psamathe surely loom large here.

60 Prominent sons lamented by their parents: the Thespiads (Ide's sons, 3.133–68), Crenaeus (9.351–445), Parthenopaeus (cf. 4.309–44; 9.570–636, 885–900), Menoeceus (10.791–814, 12.60–104; cf. 11.686–717), and, finally, the sons of Oedipus (11.605–33). The first death in the war is Opheltes/Archemorus, mourned by his parents Lycurgus and Eurydice; the last death to be mourned, immediately before the epilogue on the fate of Statius' poetic child, is Parthenopaeus, mourned with emphatic anaphora by his mother Atalanta (12.805–7).

61 She reappears for one line later in the book (12.806).

62 Henderson (1991) 75 n. 153 = (1993) 185, citing Simon (1987). Cf. Brown (1994) 129–60 (esp. 158–60). Statius understands the importance of future generations to the survival of his poem (cf. 12.815).

tell her tale.⁶³ Although Opheltes' father, Lycurgus, threatens to forcibly silence Hypsipyle (5.658–60), there is no need: with no one to hear it and no point in telling it, Hypsipyle's Lemnian narration is dead. When she first sees the body of Opheltes, Hypsipyle is struck dumb, like a mother bird whose chicks have been killed by a snake (5.592–4, 599–604). The simile echoes Vergil's description of Orpheus, mourning for Eurydice like a bereaved mother swallow (G. 4.511–15). But, while Orpheus sings for Eurydice for seven full months (4.507), and remains eloquent even in death (523–7), Hypsipyle gives a brief lament for Opheltes (*Theb.* 5.608–35) and never speaks again.

I end with a little biographical speculation. Statius, like Hypsipyle, had a foster son (*Silv.* 5.5). Like Hypsipyle, he composed poetry that caused him pain,⁶⁴ and dealt with the deaths of children. At the end of his epic, as he considered its many dead children, might he not have worried that it constituted an ill omen for his own Opheltes, his young foster son? Such speculation is attractive to the modern reader, who knows that shortly after the completion of the *Thebaid*, Statius' foster son *did* die, and that Statius was nearly struck dumb—like Hypsipyle—by the loss (*Silv.* 5.5.36–7). But unlike Hypsipyle's, his poetry did not die: he had already sent the *Thebaid* into the world, and, for all his doubts and fears, his “child” has survived to the present day. Hypsipyle lost her poetic voice, but the gods counterbalanced her calamity by restoring her biological sons to her. She exits the epic silent, but content.⁶⁵ Like readers contemplating Achilles' archetypal dilemma—early death and immortal glory, or long life followed by oblivion—we may ask whether Statius or Hypsipyle drew the happier lot.⁶⁶

63 Hypsipyle secured her position as Opheltes' nurse on the strength of her deeds during the massacre (6.147–52; cf. 5.658–60), which she also used to secure the Argives' support (5.34–6). Opheltes dead and her own sons returned, she has no need for such employment or support. Cf. also Gervais (2008) 39–42.

64 Cf. Newlands (2009c) 389–91, 393–5, 398. In the *Silvae*, Statius describes his epic as *arma nocentia* (“harmful warfare,” 1.5.8) and *laboratas... Thebas* (“Thebes I have toiled over,” 3.2.143). He characterizes his epic career in Rome as Odyssean wanderings (3.5.6–8).

65 The reunion with her sons is a portrait of sudden, absolute joy (5.710–30), but, as Delarue (2000) 336 points out, her final appearance in the epic is at Opheltes' funeral, where she mourns (6.132–4, 177–9), and is rebuked and threatened at length by the bereaved Eurydice (146–83). And yet, she is supported by her two living sons (133–4). Hypsipyle is an exceedingly *human* character (Delarue [2000] 337). Her story resists easy analysis.

66 Death and the immortality of poetry are a recurring concern in Statius' work; see the introduction to this volume, pp. 25–7. I wish to thank not only William Dominik and John Garthwaite, but also my family, especially Dustin, for their support as I completed this project during a difficult period of my life.

Transgressing Boundaries of the Unthinkable: Sophocles, Ovid, Vergil, Seneca, and Homer Refracted in Statius' *Thebaid*

Frederick Ahl

Academics sometimes privilege scholarly doctrine over a particular poet's words. Comparatists are expected to conform to the secular orthodoxies of "theory," which, like theology, subordinates the poetic to prescribed orthodoxies of interpretation. "Theory" resorts sparingly to poets' or dramatists' actual words for texts to illustrate its abstract and non-literary agenda.¹ "Theory" is the ultimate, but not the only, way of so generalizing works of literature that they can be subsumed into a database for largely self-referential social or philosophical enterprises.

Classicists, long before "theory" menaced, saw the dangers of construing dramatic poetry as, say, historical comment, but were often overly enthusiastic in precluding contemporary allusion. Wilamowitz, defending Sophocles' pristine universality, proclaimed: "it must be said in the strictest possible terms that no Sophoclean tragedy has a direct connection to a contemporary political event."² At a much further extreme, Ogilvie, writing about Statius, declared: "the *Thebaid* cannot be said to be about anything."³ Both ruled connections between Theban myth and the authors' contemporary worlds "unthinkable," a ruling this chapter sets out to refute in the Roman tradition of Oedipus.

The "Unthinkably Political" Flawed Masterpiece

The "unthinkable," a widely prevalent, yet rarely discussed, scholarly category, is a repository not for ideas impossible to think (if such there be) but for ways of thinking scholars want to forbid. It functions like the ecclesiastical design-

¹ See Norton (1994).

² Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1899) 59. For arguments against this view, see Ehrenberg (1954); Jameson (1971); Zeitlin (1986); Ahl (1991) 8–9, 26–7, 180–7, 275, (2008) 105–12, (2012); Ugolini (2000); and Vickers (2008) 1–12, 97, 105–8, 166.

³ Ogilvie (1980) 292.

nation “heresy” because ancient literary texts, nobody’s private estate, are, in practice, the domain of the academy, their interpretation dominated by its privileged spokesmen. Contemporary allusion is only one of the broader “unthinkables” we face in assessing texts based on Greek myth. Dodds, for example, ruled it unthinkable to consider whether Sophocles’ Oedipus could have “escaped his doom if he had been more careful,” since “we are not entitled to ask questions that the dramatist did not intend us to ask.”⁴ Such prohibitions yield bizarre results, most notably explanations of plays (or epics) that achieve the “meaning” required by their beliefs through suggestions of authorial error or incompetence. Dawe writes of “numerous offences against dramatic or real life” in Sophocles’ *Oedipus*, yet contends they “are not a condemnation of Sophoclean technique.”⁵ They are surely not praise. This sense of Sophocles’ *Oedipus* as a flawed masterpiece drives scholars to change and re-direct the force of Sophocles’ text and encourages translators to remove or adjust alleged inconsistencies.⁶

The “Unthinkably Political” Flawed Non-Masterpiece?

Many gains have been registered in favor of Statius’ importance in recent years. But counterbalancing, say, the replacement in 2004 of Mozley’s 1928 Loeb translation⁷ of the *Thebaid* is the 2006 reprint of Butler’s *Post-Augustan Poetry*, replete with echoes of a critical past we thought was behind us:

The Theban legend is unsuitable for epic treatment for more reasons than one. In the first place the story is unpleasant from beginning to end.⁸

[Homer] knew what fighting was from personal experience, or at least from being in touch with warriors who had killed their man. Vergil had come no closer to these things than “in the pages of a book.” Statius is yet one remove further from the truth than Vergil.⁹

4 Dodds (1966). Silk and Stern (1981) 309 point out that Dodds assumes there is a specific doom for Oedipus to escape. Dodds never explains how he knew Sophocles’ intentions.

5 Dawe (2006) 22.

6 See Ahl (2012).

7 Mozley (1928).

8 Butler (1909) 208.

9 Butler (1909) 221.

Although Shackleton Bailey provides a better text and translation of Statius than his Loeb predecessor,¹⁰ it is part of the virtual monopoly the series editors have granted his largely prosaic sensibilities on Flavian poetry for the next century. His Martial replaces Ker's, itself an exercise in managing if not the "unthinkable," at least the "off limits."¹¹ Ker presented Martial's saltier epigrams in Italian, to avoid scandal in England. The Italian translations used had themselves been published in London to avoid scandal in Italy.¹²

Shackleton Bailey's *Thebaid*, however, epitomizes the still prevalent notion that translations are most literally accurate when they obliterate what is poetic in their originals. He conveys no sense of the *Thebaid* as a masterwork, since he didn't think it was, and thus maintains the prevalent perception of the epic as mediocre. There are now alternatives to the Loeb. Both Ross and Joyce offer a grander Statius in their translations.¹³ Those who write (or intend to write) about Statius, Chaucer, or Dante constitute much of Statius' readership. So if we don't look for his greatness, nobody will.

It used to be held that the *Thebaid*'s Jupiter was good and the chthonic powers bad.¹⁴ Parallels between Domitian and the *Thebaid*'s Jupiter were, therefore, complimentary, as those of the *Silvae* were assumed to be. But after Aricò's influential *Ricerche Staziane*, it was widely accepted that the *Thebaid*'s gods are evil.¹⁵ The "unthinkable" follows its own mad logic. If the gods are evil and it is "unthinkable" that Statius criticizes Domitian, it is therefore "unthinkable" that Statius would postulate any resemblance between Domitian and his epic Jupiter, even when his own words suggest he does. Pressure has therefore risen to consider the *Silvae* apart from the *Thebaid*, since, in the *Silvae*, Statius undeniably compares Domitian to Jupiter and it is "unthinkable" that Statius is not "flattering" Domitian.

The "Formerly Unthinkably Non-Political" Flawed Masterpiece

Evaluation of the *Aeneid*, unlike Sophoclean tragedy or Statius' *Thebaid*, is based on its contemporary political "spin." Victorian educators wanted an

10 Shackleton Bailey (2003).

11 Shackleton Bailey (1993); Ker (1919).

12 Graglia (1782–1791).

13 Ross (2007); Joyce (2007). New versions also include Melville (1995), a readably fluent Chaucerian version.

14 Kroll (1932) 450; Schetter (1960) 29; Snijder (1968) 17.

15 Aricò (1972) 109–31; Williams (1972) xx; Ahl (1986) 2834–50; Feeney (1991).

ancient epic to justify their own imperialism, framed in terms of a misleading parallel between Victorian Britain's (disempowered but constitutional) monarchy and Augustan Rome's (newly empowered and unconstitutional) monarchy.¹⁶ England's royal figurehead, relic of a millennium-old monarchy, could harm no one herself; Octavian, restyled "Augustus," who won power in a civil war, was soiled with the blood of persons his contemporaries knew and had ended five hundred years of elected government.

Since Vergil's *Aeneid* was the only viable choice for an ancient imperial epic, the "parallel" between *Pax Britannica* and *Pax Romana*, a Vergil critical of Augustus was long and for many still is "unthinkable." The function of heroic epic was held to be praise not censure (or a blend): Roman epicists, "properly" read, must be shown to support established rulers. Since Vergil left his epic unrevised, one could always argue away contradictions. Nowadays the rhetoric of post-imperialist scholarship dubs "praise" readings "optimistic" and "censure" readings "pessimistic."¹⁷ "Optimism" or "pessimism" is usually situated in scholarly constructions of epics, supported by choice excerpts, not in an assessment of the poet's design, which is assumed either to be "optimistic" or non-retrievable. "Optimistic" readings are "validated" by the over-the-top (and often ambiguous) compliments poets accord the emperors, which scholars persistently and puzzlingly read as genuine opinions.

Silius Italicus, our only consular epicist, last consul of Nero's reign and last of Nero's consuls to die (Plin. *Ep.* 3.7.10), knew how to survive. But we do him no credit if we assume he was delusional enough to believe Domitian was Rome's bright hope, rival to Scipio and Alexander, and comparable to Jupiter. Counterbalancing "optimistic" readings, justified by Silius' compliments to Domitian (Sil. 3.607–29), is Silius' own explicitly pessimistic assessment of contemporary Rome:

haec tum Roma fuit: post te cui uertere mores
si stabat fatis, potius, Carthago, maneres.

SIL. 10.657–8

That's the way Rome was then; if it was standing fixed in fate that she would change her way of being after you were done, Carthage, I wish you were still in existence.

¹⁶ See Ahl (2011) and (2012).

¹⁷ See Marks (2005) esp. 245–52 for an overview of "optimistic" and "pessimistic" readings; cf. Ripoll (1998) 524–5 and Kallendorf (2007).

Silius' wish that Punic Carthage still existed (after describing its infliction upon Rome of the worst single-day military disaster until the First World War) suggests he was not wholly "optimistic" about Domitian's Rome.¹⁸

MacMullen disdained Romans who balked at accepting the principate as Rome's proper government: "under Vespasian, idealistic men still indulged in insult and agitation to show that they were not to be bought off with realities."¹⁹ Lucan's dissatisfaction under Nero is, in such eyes, both treasonous, and thus unsuitable for imperialist classrooms, and impractically defiant. Such comments as *in totum mundi prosternimur aeuum* ("we are cast down until the end of time," Luc. 7.640) suggest Lucan's view is more "pessimistic" than Silius'.

The Unthinkability of Opposing the *Princeps*

The *Thebaid*, lacking the overtly Roman features of Vergil, Lucan, and Silius, is often accorded no political "spin" at all, other than to insist it is not critical of Domitian.²⁰ The cornerstone of this contention is, ironically, the presumed universal validity of Tacitus' highly political comments about the incompatibility of *libertas*, of thinking or speaking freely, with the principate in general and Domitian in particular—observations which, Dominik points out, escaped the notice of several noteworthy contemporaries of Statius who risked, and in some cases, lost their lives (Tac. *Agr.* 2.3, 3.2–3, 43.4–45.2; *Hist.* 4.2, 4.60).²¹ Indeed, Tacitus' observation that, under Nerva and Trajan, Rome was blessed by a *rara temporum felicitate ubi sentire quae uelis et quae sentias dicere licet* could be paraphrased as "in the rare fruitfulness of these times when you have an end to the 'unthinkable' and 'unspeakable'" (*Hist.* 1.1).

Lucan wrote of *libertas* and *Caesar* as the matched gladiatorial "pair we always have" (*par quod semper habemus*, 7.695–6). Following Sallust in *Catiline*

18 Goldsworthy (2001) 13.

19 MacMullen (1966) 67, also 18–29; Brisset (1964) tried to rehabilitate Lucan by arguing that, written text and involvement in a plot to kill Nero notwithstanding, Lucan was not opposed to the principate. See, *contra*, Ahl (1976).

20 Coleman (1986) 3112. Syme (1929) 129 long ago argued that "Flavian writers of epic verse . . . seldom permitted themselves anything that might pass for an allusion to contemporary events." Syme, however, was talking about historical data that might yield potential publication dates for epics, not about how epics might suggest historical analogies. See Slaney (2009).

21 See Dominik (1994b) 144.

and Vergil in the *Aeneid*, he personified liberty as Cato.²² And Statius' open-ended topic, *fraternas acies* ("lines drawn between brothers," *Theb.* 1.1) moves Lucan's *cognatasque acies* ("lines drawn between kinfolk," *Luc.* 1.4) into sharper focus with a specially topical appropriateness for his age of civil wars followed by tensions between the brothers Titus and Domitian.

When memories and wounds of civil war are fresh, thoughts easily stray between history and myth. For Horace (*Epod.* 7.17–20) civil war is destiny's punishment for Romulus' murder of Remus. Silius vividly recalls motifs from Theban myth in *Punica* 16.527–49: Duff notes, on *Punica* 16.538, that Silius was "led astray" by the story of the Theban brothers.²³ Even in Lucan, when memories of civil war were a century old, omens presaging conflict between Caesar and Pompey recall Eteocles and Polynices (1.550–2); the suicides of Vulteius and his men evoke fratricidal slaughter in the house of Cadmus (4.549–58).

Myth evokes historical events as readily as historical events evoke myth. Maternus' friends in Tacitus, *Dialogus de Oratoribus* 3.3 worry that he has attacked the Caesars too openly in his historical drama *Cato*.²⁴ Yet Maternus proposes to add what he *omitted* from *Cato* in his forthcoming (and mythically Greek) drama *Thyestes*.²⁵ Why may the same not hold true of mythic as opposed to historical epic: of the *Thebaid* as opposed to the *Pharsalia*?²⁶

The consequences of depoliticized readings are worse for Statius than for Sophocles. Sophocles wrote about Greek myth in Greek; Statius wrote about Greek myth in Latin. So, even when stripped of contemporary allusions, Sophocles could not be described as removed from his world as Hutchinson says Statius' *Thebaid* was "removed from the Roman world."²⁷

22 Vergil balances Cato against Catiline on Aeneas' shield (*Aen.* 8.668) and makes Sergestus ancestor of the Sergii although the single notable member of the Sergii was Catiline (5.121); see Ahl (2007) 355–8, 407–8.

23 Duff (1934) 2.424–5.

24 Possibly the sophist executed by Domitian in 91 CE for making a speech against tyrants (*Dio Cass.* 67.12.5); Cameron (1967); also Kragelund (2012). Barnes (1981) disagrees.

25 Maternus' observations are complicated by his substitution, later in the dialogue, of indirect criticism for his previous direct criticism. See Strunk (2010) and Frank (1937), older but still pertinent.

26 For *Pharsalia* as the proper title of Lucan's epic, see Ahl (1968), (1976) 326–32.

27 Hutchinson (1993) 73.

The Homeric *Achilleid* and Vergilian *Thebaid*

In later years, Statius legitimately assumed the persona of a Greek poet writing in Latin. Either he himself or, more likely, his father and namesake, was honored by Athens' Council of the Areopagus for excellence and good will.²⁸ *Silvae* 5.3.146–77, Statius' *epicedion* for his father, names authors the elder Statius taught at his school in Naples to pupils: Homer, Hesiod, Epicharmus, Pindar, Ibycus, Alcman, Stesichorus, Sappho, Callimachus, Lycophron, Sophron, and Corinna. He includes no dramatists and no Latin writers, despite Mayer's contention that, from Nero's reign on, Latin poets felt no need to return to Greek originals: "Now and henceforth, Roman poets are the chief models of Roman poets."²⁹

At the beginning of the *Achilleid* Statius clearly suggests he shared his father's desire to keep Homer company, perhaps to rival him:³⁰

Magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti
progeniem et patrio uetitam succedere caelo,
diua, refer. quamquam acta uiri multum inclita cantu
Maeonio (sed plura uacant), nos ire per omnem—
sic amor est—heroa uelis . . .

ACHIL. 1.1–5

Great-souled scion of Aeacus, feared by the Thunderer, the offspring forbidden to take over his father's rule in heaven: Goddess, bring him back. Though the man's deeds are much famed in Homer of Smyrna's song, more are still waiting to be told. I hope you'll want me to go through the hero as a whole—that is what I'd love to do . . .

By proclaiming his *Achilleid*'s Greekness and promising to surpass the more limited scope of Homer's wrathful Achilles, Statius positions it outside Latin heroic epic from Ennius and Naevius onwards. In his earlier *Thebaid*, though Homer is ever present, Statius pointedly aligns himself with Vergil's Latin *Aeneid*, rich in Roman historical comment, and even ends praying his *Thebaid* may follow the *Aeneid* at a far distance (*longe sequere*, 12.817). Quintilian echoes

28 IG 2.2.3919 as corrected by Clinton (1972); see also Clinton (1989).

29 Mayer (1982) 317.

30 Juhnke (1972) shows the extent of Homeric influence; cf. Barchiesi (2001); Heslin (2005). Heslin's title (*The Transvestite Achilles: Gender and Genre in Statius' Achilleid*) shrewdly recommends the *Achilleid* to an audience beyond classics.

this phrase: *all* other Latin epicists *will* follow Vergil at a far distance: *ceteri omnes longe sequentur* (*Inst.* 10.1.87).³¹ Since Quintilian alludes to, but avoids naming, living writers, his echo may suggest he accords Statius second place.³²

Statius himself says his *Thebaid* must first transcend some menacing envy, *liuor* (12.815–19). What could he mean?

Following Nisus and Euryalus

In *Thebaid* 10.447–8, Statius expresses the surprising and puzzling hope that Vergil's Nisus and Euryalus will not spurn his warriors Hopleus and Dymas. What lies at the heart of Vergil's tale, which, like Statius' parallel tale, culminates in an apostrophe of praise to the youths named, is not immediately clear. Though rich in Homeric, Euripidean, Roman, and ancient Italic resonances, it is curiously detachable. Had it been excised by Vergil's decision, editorial choice, or under imperial pressure, no one would have postulated a lacuna.

I suggest elsewhere that Vergil is recalling the battle of the Colline Gate and the siege of Praeneste in 82 BCE, including such associated incidents as the decapitation of the younger Marius and the Sabine leader Pontius Telesinus, whose heads were paraded before the walls of Praeneste.³³ Roman and Italic names are present, close to the surface, or lurking everywhere among the casualties inflicted by Nisus and Euryalus: Rhamnes (*Aen.* 9.325 and 358), whose arms were once given to Remulus (359–62); Remus, along with his armorer and chariot-driver (330–4); Serranus (335 and 453); Sulmo (412); and Numa (453). In evoking Nisus and Euryalus, Statius invites us to look beneath the surface of his narrative too. And Servius provides another link and clue. He notes that Vergil introduces Nisus' and Euryalus' arrival at a council of Trojan leaders with a line taken from the satirist Lucilius, describing a divine council, "changing only one word" (*uno tantum sermone mutato*, *Serv. ad Aen.* 9.227). Lucilius writes: *consilium summis hominum de rebus habebant* ("they were holding a council on the most important affairs of humanity," *Lucil.* 1.4 Marx). Vergil writes: *consilium summis regni de rebus habebant* ("they were holding a council on the most important affairs of state," *Aen.* 9.227). *Regnum* provocatively implies a

31 For a different view, see Hardie (1993) 110–11.

32 For Quintilian's assessment of Latin epic (with Domitian at the end of his catalogue), see Roche (2009a); Ahl (2010).

33 Ahl (2007) 411–15; cf. 373–81 on the naming (and not naming) of "future" Romans in the underworld. See also Lovatt (2005) 77–9.

rex. As Horace tells Augustus' factotum Maecenas (*Sat.* 1.169–70): one only has to change the name and the story's about you.

In place of Lucilius' Jupiter and the gods, Vergil gives us Iulus, Aeneas' son, and humans. And the sword Iulus gives Nisus, and with which much slaughter will be done, is the work of a Cretan artist named Lycaon (*Aen.* 9.304–5). And this name has great significance for the politics of the *Thebaid*.

Divine Councils from Lucilius to Statius Via Vergil and Ovid

The gap between mythology and contemporary politics is bridged by Domitian himself, who exploited an association between himself and Jupiter.³⁴ As McNelis points out, both the *Silvae* and the *Thebaid* begin by equating Domitian with Jupiter, an association that in literature evokes the politically charged opening of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.168–252).³⁵ Here Ovid compares Jupiter's announcement (made during a council of gods where only he speaks) of his personal decision to wipe out the human race to Augustus' response to the death of Julius Caesar (200–6). Jupiter's pretext (hitherto unknown to the gods) for exterminating humanity is the crime of a single individual, which he claims is typical of humans generally: the suspiciously lupine *Lycaon* served up a Molossian hostage at a banquet for the gods. Molossian more often denotes a "bone-crushing" dog (as in *Theb.* 3.203) than a human inhabitant of Molossia. Compare "Dalmatian" in English. While all but two humans are drowned, the criminal *Lycaon* is turned into the wolf he always was. The wolf was also Rome's symbolic animal; and according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 1.11.2–12.1), Italy's earliest settlers, the Oenotrians, were originally called Lycaonians.³⁶ In the watery environment of Ovid's flood, the newly created wolf could as well be a bass, since Latin *lupus* indicates both "wolf" and "sea-wolf," that is, "bass" (Varro, *Ling.* 5.77) without the marine modifier found in the French *loup de mer*. Since the marine *lupus*, particularly the *laniatus lupus*, "woolly wolf-fish," was a delicacy prized at Roman banquets and kept in special fish-ponds *Lycaon* ends up as potential food himself.³⁷

Ovid's divine council is a variant of Vergil's far more democratic council (*Aen.* 10.1–117) where Jupiter, frustrated by Venus' and Juno's public bickering,

34 See Feeney (1991) 220–4 on the political slipperiness of such an association.

35 McNelis (2007) 10.

36 For more details, see Ahl (1985).

37 Ov. *Hal.* 113; Hor. *Sat.* 2.2.31; Plin. *HN* 9.28; Varro, *Rust.* 3.3.9; Columella, *Rust.* 8.16.2–5; Ahl (1985) 93–5.

decides that each individual's fortune, not his words of fate, will decide events. And Vergil, according to Servius (*ad Aen.* 10.104), took his council from Lucilius' first satire where Lucius Cornelius Lentulus Lupus so concocted court "justice" (*ius*) that he turned it into court "bouillon" (also *ius*) in which he was himself boiled, as Varro notes (*Ling.* 7.47).³⁸ Hence what the grammarian Diomedes calls "stew-law," *lex satura* (Keil, *Gramm. Lat.* 1.486.11), or the essence of satire itself. In other words, Vergil draws attention to Lucilius' divine council twice in consecutive books; and the gift of Lycaon's Cretan sword to Nisus by Iulus, son of Aeneas, may have suggested a point of reference for Ovid's Lycaon whose punishment by Jupiter evokes comparison with the actions of Augustus, who claimed descent from Aeneas' line.

Given its Vergilian and ultimately Lucilian pedigree, then, Ovid's comparison of Augustus to Jupiter would have been enough to send him in exile to the Black Sea. But this explanation is itself probably "unthinkable" since the usual explanation for Ovid's offense is moral laxity in the *Ars Amatoria* and an affair with Augustus' daughter Julia. These latter offenses are more likely attempts by Ovid and his friends to downgrade the nature of his offense so as not to preclude recall. But Augustus acknowledged Julia's affairs were routine when he marooned her on an island without men. And he acknowledged the seriousness of Ovid's offense when he sent him to a place whose inhabitants spoke neither Latin nor Greek. If Statius follows the dangerous precedent of Ovid, who follows Vergil, who follows Lucilius, is Statius, uniquely, not alluding to his own times? And does he not risk negative reaction from the palace if anyone draws attention to what he is doing?

Of Kingly Power

Ganiban sees Statius' negative view of kingly power in the *Thebaid* clearly and contrasts it with what he takes to be Vergil's positive view of such power in the *Aeneid*: "Monarchy, far from the perception of the Augustan *Aeneid*, is dangerous at its core."³⁹ The *Thebaid*, he adds, "engages in a serious discussion about kingly power, an issue that affected the existence of every Roman," presumably because Rome's ruler was a *princeps* with kingly power. Ganiban admits he "has not addressed the poem's attitude to Domitian" because, as he states: "Although the *Thebaid's* presentation of monarchy must be informed by the political climate in which Statius lived, it is difficult to argue that the *Thebaid* is

38 Ahl (1985) 95–9.

39 Ganiban (2007) 231. For further discussion, see Ahl (2011) 29–37 and (2012).

a direct critique either of the Flavian regime or of Domitian himself” because “too many potentially positive statements in Statius’ poetry about Domitian complicate such a view.”⁴⁰ However, Statius’ *own* comment on *Silvae* 4 in his prefatory letter to Vitorius Marcellus asks: *exercere autem ioco non licet?* (“can’t one have a little light fun?”, *Silv.* 4 *praef.* 31). Statius, we shall see, develops these words, which scholars often read as no more than a general comment about criticisms of the *Silvae* as a whole, into a specific response to a specific criticism.

Statius uses the same trivializing word, *iocus*, that Horace uses to lower the profile of some highly political odes (*Carm.* 2.1.36–40, 2.12.17–20, 2.19.25–8, 3.3.69–72) to characterize *Silvae* 4, which begins with three poems addressed to Domitian.⁴¹ Similarly Martial, when addressing Domitian, describes some of his poems as *aliqua iocorum mixtura* (“some mixing of light fun,” 8 *praef.* 3); similarly in *Epigrams* 7.8.9–10, and with particular daring, in 1.4.3 where he says of imperial triumphs: *consueuere iocos uestri quoque ferre triumphi* (“even your triumphs also got used to enduring *ioci*, ‘fun-taking’”). Ostensibly the reference is to the sort of ribaldry Suetonius mentions in Julius Caesar’s triumph over Bithynia (*Iul.* 49). Statius’ contemporaries thought the triumphs themselves were a joke.⁴²

Martial’s own oft-cited words from his prologue to the first book of epigrams (*absit a iocorum nostrorum simplicitate malignus interpres nec epigrammata mea scribat: inprobe facit qui in alieno libro ingeniosus est*, “the malicious interpreter should stay away from my simple *ioci*, nor write my epigrams for me: he who treats another’s book too cleverly is acting wickedly,” 1 *praef.* 3) can be taken as his warning against reading too much into his “light fun.” But Martial also notes (in an epigram addressed to Flaccus, surely the long-dead Horace), that anyone who calls epigrams “play” and “light fun” (*lusus iocique*) doesn’t know what epigrams are:

Nescit, crede mihi, quid sint epigrammata, Flacce,
qui tantum lusus illa iocosque uocat.

MART. 4.49.1–2

40 Ganiban (2007) 231.

41 He does not use the term to describe any of his *Epodes*.

42 Tac. *Agr.* 39: *inerat conscientia derisui fuisse nuper falsum e Germania triumphum* (“[Domitian] was conscious that his recent mock triumph over Germany was the object of derision”); cf. Suet. *Dom.* 6.

He must be speaking tongue in cheek, since he uses exactly this phrase to describe his own poems in *Epigrams* 1.14.1–2, 1.35.10–15, 4.49.1–2, 6.85.9–10, and 7.8.9–10. Criticism of Domitian, of course, need not be direct. Formidable speech, what the Greeks called *deinotes*, is the art of safe, not explicit criticism; and Quintilian spelled out the techniques.⁴³ In his powerful readings of *Silvae* 3.4 and 3.5, Garthwaite has argued that Statius was not so naive as to criticize Domitian outrightly.⁴⁴ He was, as Dominik has demonstrated meticulously, a master rhetorician.⁴⁵

Imperial Vulnerabilities

If Statius is scathing about monarchy and his observations could carry over to the Rome of his day, the pivotal question is not whether Statius intended his damnation of monarchs and monarchy to include Domitian, but how, why, or whether Statius could be confident *Domitian* would not infer, care, or notice he was not *excluded* from the disparagement. We face a similar dilemma in Lucan 4.821–5. Lucan says that Scribonius Curio exercised more power than powerful Sulla, ferocious Marius, bloodied Cinna, and the line of the Caesars' house (*Caesareaeque domus series*, 823): they merely bought Rome. Curio sold it. The epithets of Sulla, Marius, and Cinna ascend in order of violence. Why or how should Nero (or we) know (or imagine) that he is excluded from Lucan's reckoning?

Statius surely calculated his margins of error: risks to take, limits to observe. And Domitian had vulnerabilities. Juvenal tells of a fisherman who gave Domitian a large fish (alas, a *rhombus*, not a *lupus*) and uttered preposterous compliments:

“ipse [sc. rhombus] capi uoluit.” quid apertius? et tamen illi
surgebant cristae. nihil est quod credere de se
non possit cum laudatur dis aequa potestas.

JUV. 4.69–71

“[The turbot (or, perhaps, skate)] wanted to be caught.” What could be more obvious(ly untrue), *apertius*? Nonetheless his (i.e., Domitian's)

43 See my discussion of *emphasis* and formidable speech in Ahl (1984a); also Ahl (1984b), Dominik (1994b) 139–40, and Vickers (2008) 8–10.

44 Garthwaite (1984) and (1989).

45 Dominik (1994c) esp. 272–4; Dominik (2002).

plumage rose. There is nothing power when it is praised as equal to the gods could not believe about itself.

The contrast between speaking *aperte* and speaking *palam* is important. *Palam* implies blunt forthrightness and *aperte* an obliquity whose real meaning is “open” to most people, including Domitian’s courtiers. Courtiers would be as unlikely as onlookers in Hans Andersen’s tale of the emperor’s clothes to tell their emperor he was being deceived.⁴⁶

The fisherman’s flattery, in short, is a means to an end: a form of aggression against which Cicero sought to guard himself because “no-one fails to observe the person who flatters openly unless he is completely stupid” (*aperte . . . adulantem nemo non uidet nisi qui admodum est excors, Amic.* 99). Seneca observes of flattery that the more open (*apertior*) it is, the more outrageous, the straighter it keeps its own face while leaving others crestfallen and shocked, the more quickly it takes its victim by storm (*Q. Nat.* 4a *praef.* 9). In modern contexts flattery is, proverbially, the art of deceivers, some of whom, like Shakespeare’s Iago, embody Cicero’s worst fears.

Though, by universal consensus, Domitian was savage to those who criticized him *palam*, he did not burn books, as did Augustus and Caligula, and was vulnerable to those who approached him *aperte*.⁴⁷ Only among modern academics is flattery reckoned (mistakenly) to be unthreatening (if nauseating) praise.

Tacit Criticism

In his preface to *Silvae* 1 Statius says “he was ordered” to write either for or by “our most indulgent leader” about Domitian’s equestrian statue (*indulgentissimo imperatori . . . tradere iussum, Silv.* 1 *praef.* 18–19).⁴⁸ Statius could hardly refrain from writing until the emperor’s death since Domitian, born in 51 CE, was about five years his junior. Younger aristocratic contemporaries, Tacitus (born in 56) and the younger Pliny (born in 61), did not put their political careers on hold. They just postponed publication (if not composition) of most major literary works until retirement from the public sphere, as aristocrats had

46 See Ahl (1984b) and (2010) 5–11; also Andersen (1968); the brilliant paper of Winkler (1995); and Strunk (2010).

47 Cramer (1945).

48 Ahl (1984a) 91–102. Shackleton Bailey (2003) tries to soften the MSS reading *tradere iussum* by printing Sandstroem’s emendation, *tradere ausus sum* (“I was too bold as to present”).

done in republican days. If Quintilian's veiled reference to a great but unnamed historian who will one day be named is to Tacitus (*Inst.* 10.1.104), samples of Tacitus' major works were probably in private circulation.

Tacitus and others, however, wanted to retaliate for Domitian's enforcement of silence on them by subjecting his memory, for all posterity, to their own literary silence (as Tacitus' name, fortuitously, reminds us). Only after Domitian's death did they glimpse what was to become Juvenal's reality: that it was so dangerous to talk about the Flavians' successors that one had to go back and flay Domitian posthumously.

There were probably tensions between Statius and Tacitus (whose social circles overlapped) because Statius did not maintain silence but wrote copiously and successfully in Domitian's reign. Statius probably alludes to these tensions in his letter prefacing *Silvae* 4, as I suggested long ago.⁴⁹ He tells of those "who, I've heard, have criticized me for writing *id styli genus*, 'this kind of poem'" (*Silv.* 4 *praef.* 27–8). It's "pointless to dissuade me from what's already done; besides, I'd already given many to our master Domitian; and how much more significant is that than publication" (28–31). He then asks, rhetorically of critics and readers alike, whether he's not allowed to have a little fun: *exercere autem ioco non licet?*

Statius hints he knows his critic's identity: "if anyone among my acquaintances (*quisquis ex meis*) reads something unwillingly (*inuitus*), let him immediately declare his contrary opinion, *statim se profiteatur aduersum*" (33–4). He challenges his critic to do "the unthinkable" and make a public avowal of opposition. Knowing his critic won't, Statius moves without pause to his next question: "So why should I yield to his advice: *ita quare consilio eius accedam?*" "I'm the one being abused," he adds. My critic can "keep his silence and enjoy it: *taceat et gaudeat*" (34–5).

Statius, no stranger to wordplay, perhaps has Tacitus in mind and uses strategies of rhetorical "silence" against their most conveniently named proponent. He does not, of course, name Tacitus outright (*palam*) any more than Quintilian does. But, writing openly (*aperte*), he allows us to infer Tacitus is meant without violating Quintilian's scrupulously observed convention of "silence."⁵⁰ Compare Quintilian's oblique clue, discussed above, that Statius ranks second among epicists, when he echoes Statius' tribute to Vergil. Further, while declaring Horace the only Roman lyric poet worth naming, Quintilian says that, if forced to name a contemporary lyricist, one might include the (recently deceased) Caesius Bassus—although some talented poets among the

49 Ahl (1984a) 85–91.

50 Ahl (2010). See also the excellent essays in Petrone and Casamento (2010).

living (and therefore unnamed) far surpass him (*Inst.* 10.1.96). Russell suggests Quintilian may have Statius and his *Silvae* in mind.⁵¹ One should not exclude Martial either.

Boundaries of the Unthinkable

In the *Thebaid's* first fifteen lines Statius ponders a question he asks his Muses: "where do you bid me go *from*?" (*unde iubetis ire, deae?*, 1.3–4). At 1.16–17 he announces his paradoxical decision: "let the disordered house of Oedipus give shape and definition to my song" (*limes mihi carminis esto / Oedipodae confusa domus*). His external boundaries will be defined by a royal house that acknowledges no internal boundaries. And he selects these boundaries only because, as yet, he dares not select more distant chronological boundaries: warfare in Italy, or victories over Germans or Dacians in Domitian's day:

bisque iugo Rhenum, bis adactum legibus Histrum
et coniurato deiectos uertice Dacos . . .

THEB. 1.19–20

The Rhine bridged twice by your yoke, the Danube twice brought under the rule of law, Dacians hurled down from their conspiratorial heights . . .

Tacitus (*Agr.* 39) and Suetonius (*Dom.* 6) dismiss Domitian's German and Dacian triumphs as shams not warranting such celebration. Statius' suggestion that Domitian conquered the Rhine and the Danube *twice* says much the same: if one needs a second conquest, the first failed. Statius vows he will some day extend his song to include Domitian: when "the Muses' lash of inspiration" (*Pierio . . . oestro*, 1.32) gives him more courage. But he strings his lyre tautly enough now if he recounts wars in the Muses' homeland, a royal scepter that destroyed two tyrants (*geminis sceptrum exitiale tyrannis*), a limit to madness even death could not set, and flames upon a funeral pyre that started the seditious war anew (1.32–40). "All that is good, laws human and divine, and any scruples about the way one lives and dies" perishes in a struggle for naked power, *nuda potestas*, in a tiny and parched pauper's realm, *de paupere regno* (1.150–5).

The *Thebaid's* Tyrians are not Vergil's wealthy and powerful Carthaginians, but poor exiles in Thebes to whom Argos represents wealth. Statius has no

⁵¹ Russell (2001) 4.305 n. 127.

words, he claims, to describe the losses if war's goal were to bring the combined wealth of the Trojan and Tyrian lands Vergil describes under the control of one person (*quid si Phrygiae Tyriaeque sub unum / conuectentur opes?*, 1.161–2), which is what Rome did both mythically and historically.

Statius' tale of parricide, incest, and civil war, then, could begin before Oedipus and continue to his own day. He is telling, he declares after the deaths of Eteocles and Polynices in the most often cited lines of his epic, a reduced version of a tale he cannot fully express, and that *ought to be* unthinkable, untold, or at least recalled only by kings (11.574–9).

No other poet has ever represented his own major work as a kind of scapegoat for suffering in civil war—any civil war. It is as if narration of the archetypal myth of civil war would destroy all repetitions of it in human history. Its closest parallel is in the final speech of Seneca's *Oedipus*, to which we will return.

Eteocles *Princeps* and Creon *Strategos*

Domitian is the only person Statius calls on in the second person singular until *Thebaid* 1.165–8 when he observes of an unnamed person: “What a day that was for you, then, savage man! Alone in your empty palace, you looked around. All power and right were yours. Everyone was below you, and not a single head stood at an equal height.” His words could as well be describing Domitian's reaction to Titus' death. When he goes on to note that “the unspeaking (*taciti*) masses are disenchanted with their *princeps*” (1.168–70), he passes a point of no return. He has not yet named the person he refers to as *princeps*: Eteocles.

Statius' use of *princeps* in reference to a mythical monarch (1.169) rather than to a Roman emperor is unparalleled.⁵² But there are ample precedents for such “pivotal chord” political words in Greek House of Oedipus tragedies, transporting audiences instantly (albeit, in some views, “unthinkably”) from myth to contemporary politics. Even in democratic Athens, tragedians had learned in early years of competition not to write dramas set overtly in contemporary Greece.⁵³ Aeschylus' *Persae*, the first surviving tragedy and only surviving Greek historical tragedy, is set in Persia and peopled by Persians. Uniquely,

52 It would be like calling a mythic king, in American English, the “President.” There are also no instances of *princeps* used absolutely as mythic “king” in Tacitus or either Seneca, though the word is sometimes used with a following genitive or as an adjective (e.g., *Theb.* 8.367 and 11.466), just as we may talk of “the president of a committee.”

53 See Hdt. 6.21 for the penalties imposed on Phrynichus for his *Sack of Miletus*.

its central character, Xerxes, was still alive, ruling, and on Athenian military horizons when *Persae* was performed. This Aeschylean exception may suggest something about the rule in mythical tragedies: that there is more close reference to specific persons in the changing political landscapes of the tragedians' contemporary world than modern scholars like to allow. They routinely transgressed the boundaries of Wilamowitz's "unthinkable."

Athenian audiences, Vickers argues, "went to see dramas couched in myth and which might also play allusively on current events, often via personalities who were at the forefront of everyone's minds."⁵⁴ We strengthen his case by examining the opening of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Antigone asks her sister whether she has heard what "people say": that the "general" (*strategós*) has made a proclamation to the "fully assembled public" (*pandémoi pólei*) forbidding Polyneices' burial (*Ant.* 7–8). Antigone's term *strategós* suggests an elected official acting in a legislative capacity, as a *strategós* did in democratic Athens, not, as elsewhere in Sophocles (*Aj.* 1106–16, 1232, 1386; *Phil.* 264, 1024), a military officer in a military context, much less a mythical ruler like Creon with no constitutional right to be ruling even though his name means "ruler."

Like Statius, Sophocles sets us between an unnamed mythic character and a known contemporary person evoked by using a word with contemporary political resonance. In mythic terms, Antigone is referring to Creon. But when *Antigone* was staged (between 443 and 438 BCE) Antigone's reference to "the general," without further comment, would have conjured Athens' contemporary leader Pericles just as surely as *princeps* would have conjured a Roman emperor, including Domitian, in Statius' Rome.

Although ten generals were elected annually in Athens and not allowed to hold office in consecutive years, special arrangements accommodated Pericles, "the tenth general" every year from 443 until his death in 429.⁵⁵ *Antigone* 7–8 is the only time anyone calls Creon *strategós* in *Antigone* just as *Thebaid* 1.169 is the only time in any Latin epic a mythic king is called a *princeps*. Creon, "Ruler," is called by a number of different titles in *Antigone*—in contrast to Oedipus in Sophocles' later *Oedipus*, who is called (and calls himself) *tyrannos*, "tyrant," throughout.

Sophocles makes Creon's position in *Antigone* as hard to categorize as Pericles' position in contemporary Athens. Even Pericles' admirers viewed him as a monarch or *de facto* tyrant (Plut. *Per.* 16.1). Thucydides comments, famously, that Periclean Athens, in theory a democracy, was becoming, in

54 Vickers (2008) 16.

55 Vickers (2008) 14–33 makes a powerful case for many allusions to Pericles in *Antigone*; cf. Vickers (1997).

practice, rule by the leading man (2.65.9–10). Wade-Gery (who I don't think ever read Statius) described Pericles' ascendancy as a principate.⁵⁶ Others, including Vickers, see Pericles' ascendancy in a far grimmer light.⁵⁷

Similarly, *prostátes*, "representative," "spokesman," became common when popular leaders like Cleon, Athens' leading politician for seven years after Pericles' death, built their power by becoming *prostátai* for non-citizen residents who were forbidden to speak in the assembly and were required by law to have a citizen's name inscribed over their own.⁵⁸ Sophocles' juxtaposition of "Creon" and "*prostátes*" when Teiresias declares he does not need to sign up for Creon's sponsorship (*OT* 409–11) connects Creon and the house of Labdacus with Cleon and contemporary politics—an identification aided by an Athenian upper-class speech affectation called labdacism, which substitutes "l" for "r" and turns Creon into Cleon.⁵⁹ Since, as Quintilian notes (*Inst.* 1.5.32), labdacism is an error in speech, not in writing, it takes written form only in contexts of outright parody rather than in tragedy.⁶⁰ Yet Labdacism has special appropriateness for descendants of Theban Labdacus and, through Labda, mother of the Corinthian tyrant Cypselus, for the history of tyranny.⁶¹

Similarly, in the disputed ending of Aeschylus' *Septem Contra Thebas* 1005–25, a herald tells leading Cadmeian "public councilors," *démou proboulois*, that the people has passed a resolution allowing Eteocles' burial, but prohibiting Polyneices'. There were no officers called *probouloi* in ancient Thebes. But they were in charge in Athens for one year: 411 BCE, when democracy was overthrown and ten *probouloi* appointed, theoretically to recommend, but in fact to enact, constitutional changes on their own authority (Thuc. 8.1.3). One was Sophocles himself (Arist. *Rh.* 1419a25).

Próboulos, then, was not in Aeschylus' original, but added for a revival of *Septem* in or after 411 BCE.⁶² The addition does not mean *Septem's* ending is

56 Wade-Gery (1945).

57 Especially in the view of Pericles' alleged brutality in the events following the siege of Samos in 438 BCE: Vickers (2008) 14–15.

58 See Ar. *Ran.* 569 and Arist. *Rh.* 3.8 (1408b); also Ahl (1991) 92–7, (2008) 99–104; Vickers (2008) 42–6; and, more generally, Vickers (1997).

59 Ahl (1991) 95–7.

60 Palladas, *Anth. Pal.* 11.323 and Ar. *Vesp.* 45, spoofing Socrates' friend Alcibiades.

61 See Vickers (1987) 143, (1997) 21–6, 112–22, 141–8, (2008) 1–12; Ahl (1991) 104–22, (2008) 99–112.

62 In 411 BCE Aristophanes mocks this newly important but short-lived office in *Lysistrata*, whose chief male (and feckless) character is a *próbulos*. *Lysistrata* is not only built, like *Septem Contra Thebas* or *Antigone*, on the theme of women challenging male governance in war time, but it also contains (187–9) an explicit parody of the oath the Seven Argive

spurious, but rather that someone updated the tragedy's "contemporary" references for the revival. Few words need have been changed.

The Senecan Oedipus

Updating of external references indicates that the Oedipus myths are traditionally intertwined with, not isolated from, contemporary politics and not unthinkable in any Greek tragedy. But what about Senecan tragedy? While Euripides' *Phoenissae* and Seneca's tragedy by the same title seem more obviously connected with the *Thebaid* than either Sophocles' or Seneca's *Oedipus*, it is Seneca's *Oedipus* that provides the crucial link establishing the relationship between the mythic Oedipus and Roman *principes*.

No one could order Seneca's Oedipus offstage, as Teiresias, Jocasta, and even the chorus dismiss his Sophoclean predecessor. Sophocles' Oedipus even tries to get Creon to order him off. In contrast, when Seneca's Creon advises Seneca's Oedipus to abdicate, Oedipus has him cast in a dungeon and left there (*Oed.* 687–708). Absolute monarchy, sometimes a threat in Greek tragedy, is the immovable and Roman reality of Senecan tragedy.

Seneca's *Oedipus* is not only the sole extant work of Latin poetry before Statius' *Thebaid* that treats the story of Oedipus as ruler of Thebes, but one of only two in which Oedipus or the Sphinx is actually named. The other is Plautus, *Poenulus* 442–4.⁶³ Augustan poets avoid direct reference to Oedipus and the Sphinx, whose names do not occur in contexts where we might expect them. Vergil never names either, yet puts images of Cleopatra and Egypt on Aeneas' shield (*Aen.* 8.688–97). Nor is there a Sphinx among the monsters under the leaves of his underworld elm (6.282–94). Ovid is similarly silent in the *Metamorphoses*. He bypasses the story of Oedipus in favor of tales about Teiresias arising, curiously, from *remissos... iocos* ("casual light talk," *Met.* 3.316–38) between Jupiter and Juno about sex, which, ultimately, costs Teiresias his eyesight. Ovid's Cephalus alludes to Oedipus as "son of Laius" and the Sphinx simply as the "bard" (*uates*, *Met.* 7.759–61), which, when destroyed,

leaders make on a shield as they ready their attack (*Sept.* 42–8), which only works for an audience familiar with *Septem*, first staged before much of the current audience was born, fifty-five years ago, but probably revived shortly before *Lysistrata*.

- 63 There Milphio claims he cannot understand what Agorastocles is saying: the task would need Oedipus, interpreter for the Sphinx. Yet Milphio later claims he can speak Punic and interpret what the Carthaginian Hanno says (Plaut. *Poen.* 990–1028).

is replaced instantly by another monster that was pursued by his dog; both creatures were transformed into statues, conferring victory on neither (786–91).

If Moret is right, the artistic mirrors the literary record: the Sphinx is conspicuously *absent* from mainstream, monumental Augustan art and relegated to minor places: small sides of sarcophagi and provincial bas-reliefs; also signet rings.⁶⁴ Caution was needed because Augustus, on gaining supreme power, made the Sphinx the device on his personal signet ring, presumably to symbolize his victory over Cleopatra and annexation of Egypt. He later replaced the Sphinx with Alexander the Great, and finally with his own image—a practice continued by his successors (Suet. *Aug.* 50). The Sphinx ring was his symbol of his authority. He had duplicates made for Agrippa and Maecenas so they could act on his behalf in his absence (Dio Cass. 51.3.4–6, Plin. *HN* 37.10). Augustus' ring was, Carter observes, “in use before 29 BC and was inevitably associated with a rule that many Romans considered illegal or tyrannical.”⁶⁵

Dio first mentions the Sphinx ring when discussing 31 BCE, the year of Actium, but does not say when Augustus changed images. The Sphinx symbol transformed Augustus into a contemporary Oedipus or Sphinx, or both, depending on one's perspective. For Augustus not only sealed his letters with the Sphinx-seal but *encoded* them (Dio Cass. 51.3.7). Later Caesars neither used the Sphinx ring nor were famous, as Augustus was, for victories over Egypt or managing the grain supply in time of famine. There was, then, both a greater relevance and a greater potential risk in Augustan Rome than in Claudian Rome, Neronian Rome, or fifth-century Athens for someone telling the story of Oedipus.

The Oedipus myth assumes a daringly original new life in Seneca, linked with, but distinct from, Sophocles' *Oedipus*. And it ends, unlike Sophocles', on a note the hero considers triumphant; Oedipus construes his departure as an effective purgation of the city's sickness and death (Sen. *Oed.* 1051–61).

Sophocles sets the Oedipus myth (for the first time) against a backdrop of plague evoking the Athenian plague of 430/29 and its milder recurrence in 427. His *Oedipus* was probably performed when memories of the plague and of associated political activities were still fresh. But the tragedy notoriously lacks clear internal time-markers. A Corinthian tells Oedipus he and a Theban herdsman (a household slave, according to Jocasta, until Oedipus' accession to power in Thebes) ran, for six-month periods over three years, one herd and

64 Moret (1984) 1.113; Zanker (1990) 48–50 and figs 36b and 38 talks of the Sphinx as “a frequent element in Augustan art” but the scant evidence he adduces is either provincial or miniature: signet rings and coins.

65 Carter (1982) 171.

two herds respectively on Mt. Cithaeron (55 kilometers distant from Corinth). No one specifies how long ago this improbable herding occurred or when Laius was killed and the Sphinx destroyed. When Oedipus asks how long ago Laius died, Creon, who surely knows, responds evasively: "long years of bygone time could well be measured back" (Soph. *OT* 609).

The Senecan *Oedipus*, however, contains an internal time-marker crucial to our understanding of how Seneca and Statius used the Theban myth. Seneca's Jocasta, responding to Oedipus' question about when Laius died, notes, oddly: "the tenth harvest is now being reaped" (*decima iam metitur seges*, *Oed.* 783). I say "oddly" because Oedipus earlier refers to the *failure* of harvests (49–51). Given Roman inclusive counting, nine years have elapsed between Laius' death and the present famine, which is, in Oedipus' opinion, a resurgence of the Sphinx (106–8). The Delphic oracle, cited by Creon, makes the same connection between the plague and Laius' death (233–8); and Oedipus' reward for destroying the Sphinx was rulership at Thebes (104–5), unavailable until Laius' death.

This is the only definite indicator of elapsed time between theatrical past and theatrical present in either *Oedipus* tragedy. But why nine years? Such a short interval leaves Oedipus' sons by Jocasta implausibly young to fight, any time soon, the traditional civil war between brothers that the play's omens presage. But if the nine-year interval is relevant to a contemporary allusion rather than to the mythic tradition, an answer emerges.

There was a famine following the failure of the harvests, and an accompanying plague, at Rome in 22 BCE, nine years after Augustus (then Octavian) defeated Antony and his Egyptian allies at Actium and began using his Sphinx ring (Dio Cass. 54.1.3–4). It probably started after the floods in the preceding year. But catastrophe was averted. Egypt, one of Rome's principal suppliers of grain, was virtually Augustus' "personal fief" after Actium.⁶⁶ He took charge of the grain supply at Rome and eventually brought matters under control.⁶⁷

If there is an allusion to the famine and plague of 22 BCE, then the closer composition of the Senecan *Oedipus* is set to that year, the more powerful the resonances will be, given the otherwise rare representation of Oedipus as a ruler in contemporary art and literature. The famine of 22 BCE and the motif on Augustus' ring were probably too long ago to be meaningful for an audience in Claudian or Neronian Rome some seventy years later.

66 Charles and Ryan (2009) 3–4 and n. 19. For Augustus' control of access to Egypt by wealthy Romans, see Tac. *Ann.* 2.59.3 and *Hist.* 1.11.1.

67 Garnsey (1989) 30–1; cf. Garnsey (1983) 61–3 and Dio Cass. 55.26.1–3 with the comments *ad loc.* of Swan (2004).

Our sense of Seneca's *Oedipus* is, however, limited by the universal and rarely challenged modern consensus that this tragedy and at least seven other plays the manuscript tradition attributes to Seneca "the tragedian" were written by the philosopher and politician, the younger Seneca (c. 4 BCE to 66 CE) rather than by the only other securely identified Seneca, his father: the elder Seneca (c. 55 BCE to 37 CE).⁶⁸ The consensus view appeals to scholars because it allows annexation of the poetic by the philosophical, licensing interpretation of the tragedies as poetic extensions of the younger Seneca's Stoicism. The consequent fusion of tragic and philosophical has generated the philosophically odd notion of Stoic tragedy; and critics occasionally construe the tragedies in accord with a stricter Stoic orthodoxy than we find in the eclectic views expressed in Seneca's letters. Since the younger Seneca expresses personal and philosophical views so explicitly in his letters, little energy has been expended in independent extrapolation of authorial views from the often ambiguous and contradictory statements made by characters and choruses in the tragedies.

Yet the chorus in Seneca, *Troades* 1024–33 echoes the famous opening of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* 2.1–6; and its statement that, after death, we lie "where things never born lie" (*quo non nata iacent*, *Tro.* 408) sounds so Epicurean that Longo, citing the phrase, slightly modified, as *ubi non nata iacent*, mistakenly attributes it to Lucretius.⁶⁹

Precise dating is impossible if we accept, by default, the authorship of the younger Seneca, though an ingenious article by Fitch has established what most accept as the probable order of composition for Seneca's tragedies.⁷⁰ Tarrant observes: "covert allusions to contemporary Roman figures or incidents, if they exist in Seneca's plays, are not likely to be traceable at this distance, especially since any such references must have been designed to be ambiguous and therefore deniable."⁷¹ Deniable ambiguities are the writer's stock-in-trade wherever direct expression is prohibited in a particular discourse. But to locate clues, one must be looking in the right era. And if the younger Seneca is the author, contemporary allusions would be to events in the reigns of Caligula, Claudius, or Nero. While there had been a famine at Rome in 6 CE, there was nothing comparable in his adult life until just before his death in 66 CE.

If the elder Seneca is the author, we have clues other than the internal chronology of *Oedipus*. The chorus' complaint in *Phaedra* 983–4 that the people

68 The issue of authorship was raised again, but not taken to its fullest conclusion, by Kohn (2003); cf. Ahl (2008) 11–16, 128–32.

69 Longo (2008) 102.

70 Fitch (1981) 102, 289–307.

71 Tarrant (1995) 228.

delights in giving *fascēs* (symbols of consular office) to a wicked man (*turpi*) makes sense only if composition preceded Augustus' ending of popular elections to the consulship in 5–6 CE. The people gave the *fascēs* to no one thereafter; emperors designated consuls themselves. So *Phaedra* was most likely written before 5 CE.⁷² Similarly *Troades*' pointed omission of references to Aeneas and Trojans surviving the sack of Troy carries more punch the more closely it follows publication of the *Aeneid*. The sole male Trojan survivor named is Antenor (*Tro.* 60). But he is identified only as the husband of a female captive, not as a survivor, much less as future founder of Padua.

Yet Seneca's *mis-en-scène* not only recalls Aeneas' description of Helenus' and Andromache's miniature Troy in *Aeneid* 3, but shows Astyanax hurled to his death from the very tower Vergil's Aeneas claims he destroyed during the sack of Troy (*Aen.* 2.453–68).⁷³

Statius and the Tyranny of Monarchs

If Seneca's *Oedipus* is Augustan, it has much to say about both Rome and Octavian. Unlike Sophocles' Oedipus, Seneca's ruler remains focused on the sufferings of his city and feels guilty that he is exempt from them. His underlying motivation is noble, in that he intends to serve the interests of his city. The tragedy also warns that any advice the ruler is given to step aside (a recurrent theme in Augustus' regime) is likely to be suspect and possibly motivated by the ambitions of those who seek his power. Given the extreme youth of Oedipus' sons and the imprisonment of Creon, however, Oedipus' distrust of himself, assault upon himself, and self-banishment bodes ill for the state, despite his good intentions. Yet the play is probably not going to stir the wrath of an emperor who has pointedly identified himself with Oedipus, even though Seneca is as candid as was Augustus himself about his cynical understanding of power as we see in Dio Cassius' presentation of him.

Statius, in contrast, endows Oedipus and his sons, especially Eteocles, with no redeeming characteristics at all. He has inherited from Seneca a politicized

72 If *Phaedra* is before 5 CE and *Oedipus* after 22 BCE, the other tragedies of Seneca are likely to be of middle or late Augustan date. They can therefore be uncoupled from the younger Seneca's Stoicism and accorded a greater likelihood of being designed for public performance. Most staging restrictions under later Julio-Claudians did not apply under Augustus.

73 See Ahl (2007) 337.

and moderately “optimistic” Roman reading of the Oedipus myth and recast it in the light of Rome’s more recent horrors.

The Wanderer Speaks

It is not horrors the gods commit that bother Statius’ Aletes in *Thebaid* 3 as he contemplates the corpses of those killed by Tydeus and ventures to do what only one other person does in the *Thebaid*⁷⁴ and what Statius dares his critic to do in his preface to *Silvae* 4: criticize the tyrant overtly. One can do nothing about divinely inflicted catastrophes, Aletes declares (3.201). But Thebes’ present suffering is caused by an unjust king: *nunc regis iniqui* (206), the same Eteocles earlier identified as *princeps*. He, king or *princeps*, is mortal, and outrages committed by mortals ought to be censured. So Aletes exercises a freedom of speech that comes with old age and a desire to make up for previous compromises (214–17).

Statius does not name Aletes randomly, even though he is, like Statius himself, a nobody in the world of kingly power. The name selected serves as portal to the vast intellectual and Hellenic substructure of the *Thebaid* whose complexity beggars the imagination. Aletes, in Greek, means “The Wanderer.” And Socrates, in Plato, *Cratylus* 421B, observes of *alétheia*, conventionally rendered in English as “truth”: “the divine motion of the universe is, I think, called by this name because it is a divine wandering (*theia ale*).” Socrates not only derives *alétheia* from *ale*, “wandering,” but expresses it in an anagram fusing the notions of wandering and divinity. This etymology is as epic as Homer. Odysseus, master of disguise and oblique speech, claims knowledge of Eumaeus’ lost master: “since I have wandered, *aléthen*, far” (*Od.* 14.120). But Eumaeus continually resists, in kind, Odysseus’ etymologizing insinuations that there is (necessarily) truth in what a traveler says.⁷⁵

74 Maeon, in *Theb.* 3.58–95.

75 Eumaeus catches Odysseus’ use of this participle (“wander”) as a pun on *alethés* (conventionally, “true”) and crushes it: “no man (*ou tis*) who has come wandering (*alaleménos*) here with news of him could persuade his wife and dear son . . . men in need and wanderers (*alétai*) tell random lies (*pseudontai*) and don’t want to narrate the truth (*aléthéa*)” (*Od.* 14.122–5); cf. “You really stirred my soul deeply when you said . . . how much you suffered and how much you wandered (*hósa aléthes*). But . . . you won’t persuade me” (361–4). Eumaeus then tells of a lying wanderer who “tricked me with a story: he’d killed a man and, “having wandered” (*aletheís*) over much of the earth, came to my place (380–1). The traveler, then, is not necessarily telling the truth: *aletheís*, “having wandered,” in this participial form, even carries the same syllabic accent as *alethés*, “true.” Finally, Eumaeus

Socrates in *Cratylus* also etymologizes *alétheia* as “the negation of oblivion”: “not forgetting.”⁷⁶ *Alétheia* in this sense carries extensive philosophical and religious resonances: notably of the Pythagorean doctrine that knowledge is recollection, *anámnesis*, fundamental to Platonism, according to which the soul knows everything before its incarnation. Recollection is the main issue of Plato’s *Meno* (81a–86a) and of the Myth of Er in *Republic* 10 (614a).

The Myth of Er, introduced as “no long tale to Alcinoös,” is not quite like, yet obviously recalls, Odysseus’ tales and their etymologies of *alétheia* on the basis of *ale*, “wandering,” in the *Odyssey*. We find, rather, souls of the dead encamped on the Plain of *Lethe*, “Forgetfulness,” awaiting reincarnation beside the river named both *Amelétes*, “Indifference,” and *Lethe*. Before they cross that river and re-enter bodies, they must drink from this river and forget (*epilanthánes-thai*) everything. Er, having lain among the dead in battle and descended (and wandered) among the dead, is prevented from drinking the waters of oblivion and therefore remembers everything (621a–d). If knowledge is recollection, it is non-forgetfulness, that is to say *a-léthe-ia*.⁷⁷

It is, then, appropriate that a character whose name encapsulates the quintessence of epic travelling, Aletes, “The Wanderer,” should proclaim over the bodies of the Theban war’s first dead what it is “unthinkable” to proclaim forthrightly: the crimes of the *princeps* responsible for their deaths. In the unending Pythagorean cycle of death and rebirth, that *princeps* is not just Eteocles, or just Eteocles and Domitian, but all murderous tyrants between and after, in a tale that should really be told only once then forgotten or told only by kings. It will, Statius knows, be repeated endlessly. And he denies us the Hollywood ending we try desperately to impose.

His Theseus will indeed restore their dead to the Argive women who take refuge at the altar of Clemency. But, as with the migratory birds to which these women are compared, refuges sought vary with seasons and needs (*Theb.* 12.515–18). And Theseus has a dark side. He has just returned to Athens in triumph with the spoils and captives from another group of militant women,

reduces Odysseus’ tale to a five line summary for Telemachus, while insisting that his version is “the entire ‘truth,’” *alethéa pant’* (16.61). See Ahl (2002) 117–32.

76 Its chief antonyms are *pseudos* (“[the] false”), *lethe* (“forgetfulness, oblivion”), and *dóxa* (“belief, opinion, seeming”). Hence Parmenides’ contrasting poems, *The Way of Alétheia* and *The Way of Dóxa*, and Plato’s similar distinction between the worlds of knowledge and belief in *Timaeus* 29b–c. See Detienne (1960); Ahl (1985) 47 and 321–2, (1991) 85–8, and (2002).

77 Hence the plain of non-forgetfulness *Alétheia* in Pl. *Phdr.* 248b.

the Amazons, all but one of whom seek refuge, not at the altar of Clemency, but, pathetically (perhaps hopelessly), at the altar of Minerva the Virgin (12.481–539). The one captive not seeking refuge is already “about to bear a child to her enemy husband” (*hosti paritura marito*, 12.539): Hippolytus, whose name, “Destroyed by Horses,” tells only part of his disastrous future.

Similes and Their Programmatic Role in the *Thebaid*

William J. Dominik

When one thinks of epic similes, one invariably thinks of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Subsequent poets—both Greek and Roman—followed in Homer's path by incorporating similes into their epics. Critics of Homer have long maintained in effect that a simile in Homeric epic has a brief, specific significance relevant to its immediate context,¹ though this view has been challenged in more recent studies that suggest a broader significance for similes beyond their localized context.² Vergil's *Aeneid* has often been used as the standard by which subsequent Roman epicists, including Statius, have been judged. Yet Statius, who at the end of the *Thebaid* beseeches his epic to follow in the footsteps of the *Aeneid* (12.816–17),³ uses similes much more frequently than Vergil does in his epic.⁴ In this sense, at least, Statius does not merely follow in Vergil's path but outdoes him. Indeed Statius' use of similes in the *Thebaid* forms an important part of his poetic program and is closely related to the major themes of the epic. The important role of the similes in the *Thebaid* is manifest given that each book contains on average 19.7 similes⁵ with about 8.4 per cent of the text being devoted to them.

Scholars in the early twentieth century maintained that Roman imperial epicists use similes primarily to embellish the narrative,⁶ though it has been recognized that they serve specific functions such as to provide a brief analogy between a character's conduct and a natural event.⁷ According to the author of

1 Cf. Shewan (1935) 217–28; Lattimore (1951) 43–4; Coffey (1957) 113–32, esp. 132.

2 E.g., Scott (1974), (2009); Ready (2011).

3 Many critics (e.g., Mozley [1963] 17; Williams [1978] 150; Hainsworth [1991] 135; Quint [1993] 132–3) have interpreted these lines as an acknowledgement of the *Thebaid's* poetic inferiority to the *Aeneid*; for a different view that considers them to constitute not only an acknowledgement of the *Thebaid's* own belatedness in the poetic and epic traditions but also a self-positioning, self-memorializing statement regarding the *Thebaid's* own contribution to these traditions, see Dominik (2003).

4 More than twice as often, in fact, based upon the figure of 116 similes by Hornsby (1970) 7.

5 The number of similes per book ranges between eleven (book 1) and thirty-five (book 6).

6 E.g., Summers (1920) 34–6; Steele (1918) 91; cf. Butler (1909) 195 n. 1.

7 A well-known example in Vergil's *Aeneid* is the representation of Aeneas as an oak tree that cannot be swayed by Dido's appeal to stay in Carthage (4.438–49).

the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a simile more specifically involves a comparison between two essentially dissimilar objects on the basis of a similarity in one or more aspects (4.45-59). In his discussion of similes in the *Institutio Oratoria* (e.g., 5.11.1-2, 22-9; 8.3.72-81), Quintilian observes that the simile is useful in helping to prove an argument and in making an illustration more vivid (8.3.72). These practical and aesthetic functions are evident in Statius' use of similes, though the various functions of the similes in the *Thebaid* far transcend these basic roles; even so, modern scholars considered the similes in the *Thebaid* specifically to be an end in themselves, devoid of purpose, merely decorative, lacking in variety, overlong, and overnumerous.⁸

Overview

The number of similes that critics record in the *Thebaid* varies enormously—between 179 and 210 similes.⁹ Legras, Luque Lozano and Mallin are the only scholars to list the similes,¹⁰ though they each omit approximately a few dozen and cite many of them with different line numbers from the similes cited here.¹¹ The large variation in the number of similes cited by scholars is perhaps partly due to different interpretations of what constitutes a simile. For the purpose of this investigation a simile is understood to refer to a situation where the poet is explicitly comparing people, objects, or actions in the narrative with persons,

8 E.g., Butler (1909) 224-5; Dimsdale (1915) 462; Steele (1918) 90-1; Summers (1920) 34-5.

9 Watkiss (1966) 228 mentions 179 (cf. Watkiss [1966] 482 n. 2); Luque Lozano (1986) 165 cites the figure of 202; Holland (1973) 49 counts 191; Williams (1972) 37 *ad* 10.13f. mentions 193; Legras (1905a) 295 asserts there are 195 (193 excluding the spurious lines 6.229-33, 7.19-21; cf. Burck [1979b] 347); Mallin (2013) 39 cites 196; Burgess (1978) 270 mentions "about 200"; and Obrycki (1975) 353 states there are "okolo 210."

10 Legras (1905a) 296-9; Luque Lozano (1986) 180-4; Mallin (2013) 103-6.

11 Legras (1905a) 296-9, who cites only the first lines of similes, lists the following thirty-two similes with different initial line numbers from those in my lists (either through error or because he uses Kohlmann's [1884] edition): 4.705-10, 4.789-92, 4.801-3, 4.812-15, 4.828-30, 6.19-24, 6.51-3, 6.107-10, 6.114-17, 6.186-92, 6.253-4, 6.386, 6.407, 6.408-9, 6.422-3, 6.451-3, 6.483-4, 6.578-82, 6.598-601, 6.665-7, 6.685-8, 6.716-18, 6.753-4, 6.777-8, 6.799-801, 6.864-7, 6.868-9, 6.880-5, 8.460-5, 9.9-11, 9.858-60, 10.511-12, 10.619. Luque Lozano (1986) 180-4 lists a number of similes with different line numbers from those cited in my lists, with at least some of these differences accounted for by typographical errors; he also includes 2.418-19, which I do not consider to be a simile: see below, n. 12. Mallin (2013) 103-6, who, like Legras (1905a) 296-9, cites only the first lines of similes, lists some initial lines of passages that do not comprise similes (e.g., 6.69-70, 7.390-92, 8.392-4, 9.15-16).

things, or actions not strictly part of the narrative. In this sense the word “comparison” is perhaps better than “simile,” though all comparisons are marked by a specific marker or signifier such as *qualis*, *ut*, *uelut*, *sic*, and *ut*; an adjective in the comparative degree; or other words suggesting that a comparison with objects or people outside the narrative is to follow (e.g., *putes*, *non aliter*).¹² Based on the aforementioned definition and these signifiers,¹³ this study cites 237 similes.¹⁴ The similes range in length from only a few words (6.306, 6.521, 7.477, 11.483, 12.107) to just over eight lines long (3.22–30), with the average length being just under 3.5 lines.

Given the number and importance of the similes in the *Thebaid*, an investigation of their different types and programmatic role is revealing.¹⁵ The most common types of similes—apart from those containing divine and human mythological figures—are those featuring nautical aspects, including ships in storms; other natural elements; bulls, lions and tigers, and other animals; semi-human figures (e.g., Lapiths, centaurs, giants) and monsters.¹⁶ These categories of similes not only draw attention to but also emphasize the central themes of the epic. Although most often the similes appear singly, they appear occasionally in pairs (as double similes) and on one occasion in a group of three (as a triple simile).¹⁷ The following sections focus on the thematic role of some similes that have provoked critical debate and disagreement over the past few decades of scholarship on the *Thebaid*, but an examination of the different kinds of similes and their various functions in the epic is integrated into this discussion.

12 Words that can function as a signifier of a simile do not always serve this function; for example, I do not consider the following passages introduced by *sic* (7.390–2, 8.393–4) and *ceu* (2.418–19, 6.69–70, 6.522–4, 8.392–3) to be similes.

13 Instead of similes Statius sometimes uses metaphors, which appear without the signifier (e.g., 4.397–404, 9.15–16).

14 See Appendix A for a complete list of the similes in the *Thebaid*. I thank Kyle Gervais for compiling an initial list of similes for this chapter.

15 For the earliest significant study on the similes of the *Thebaid*, see Legras (1905a) 295–310; for studies on the similes since the mid-twentieth century, see Kytzler (1962); Perkins (1974); Burgess (1978) 270–86, 512–19; Luque Lozano (1986); Corti (1987); Scotto di Clemente (1992); Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 127–70; Pice (2003) 235–58; and Sanna (2006).

16 See Appendix B for lists of these types of similes.

17 Double similes: 1.419–20/1.421–4, 1.475–7/1.479–81, 3.253–4/3.255–9, 4.312/4.315–16, 6.407/6.408–9, 6.596–7/6.598–601, 6.864–7/6.868–9, 8.209–10/8.212–14, 9.437–8/9.438–9, 12.12–13/12.15–21; triple simile: 6.715/6.716–18/6.719–21 (6.719–21 are bracketed lines).

Themes and Similes

Statius' use of similes is a critical part of his narrative strategy in the *Thebaid*.¹⁸ Indeed of all the aforementioned roles played by similes in the epic, their most important function serves to draw attention to its central themes. Statius inserts a simile on average every forty-one lines into his narrative and thereby helps to keep its controlling ideas at the forefront of his audience's mind. Overall the major themes of the *Thebaid* are concerned with the exercise of power on the supernatural and human levels and the consequences of the abuse of power in terms of the suffering and impotence of its victims.¹⁹ Statius' meditation on power primarily concerns the role of the gods and their calamitous effect upon humanity in terms of its suffering and lack of free will.²⁰ On the human level the focus is on the institution of monarchy, which is portrayed as a cruel and oppressive institution that inflicts widespread and long-standing suffering upon subjects who are largely innocent of any wrongdoing.²¹ The main stimulus of the destructive human acts of the *Thebaid* is shown to spring from the internal motivation and actions of the gods, especially Jupiter, rather than from the innate disposition and drive of the individual human characters.²² The consequence of the overriding supernatural control of human affairs is that the characters of the poem have little opportunity to display free will and therefore to exert any real meaningful influence over the direction of events that occur in the epic.²³ While some critics have challenged these views,²⁴ a study of the function of the similes in the *Thebaid* demonstrates how they underscore these major themes.

Consistent with the stress laid upon the aforementioned themes in the narrative as a whole, the similes show *inter alia* the power of the gods and the destruction they cause, the supernatural infusion of humanity with *furor*, the gods interfering in human affairs with disastrous consequences, and humans who are portrayed as being powerless and who suffer as a result of supernatural machination and a hostile natural environment. Statius focuses overwhelmingly on the negative aspects of the persons, objects, and actions being

18 On Statius' overall narrative strategy in the *Thebaid*, see Dominik (1996a) 55–69 and (2005) 515–17.

19 Dominik (1994b) 1–129, (2005) 519–22, (2010a), and (2012a).

20 Dominik (1994b) 1–75, 99–129, (2005) 519–22, (2010a), and (2012a).

21 Dominik (1990), (1994b) 76–98, and (2005) 520–1.

22 Dominik (1994b) 1–75, (2005) 519–20, (2010a), and (2012a).

23 Dominik (1994b) 99–129, (2005) 521–2, (2010a) 142–4, and (2012a) 197–9.

24 E.g., Hill (1996b), (2008); Delarue (2000) 291–300.

compared in his similes with the result that they come to serve as an important commentary on the action in the rest of the narrative. In fact, many of the similes are relevant to two or even three of the major themes.²⁵ An examination of select similes for each of these themes—the abuse of divine power, the abuse of monarchical power, and the consequences of the abuse of power—will serve to illustrate how Statius uses his similes to reinforce the controlling ideas of the *Thebaid*.²⁶

Abuse of Supernatural Power

The *Thebaid* is a tale of the supernaturally engineered annihilation of humanity. The divine apparatus of the *Thebaid* underpins its thematic structure, as the destructive impact upon humankind of its relationship with the gods is the focus of the entire epic. Abuse of supernatural power is the predominant, pervasive motif in the *Thebaid*. The numerous cruel and unjust actions of the higher powers bear testimony to this fact, as does their frequent lack of compassion and concern for humanity. Through their actions the various supernatural powers, especially Jupiter, Pluto, and the Furies, are instrumental in inciting humanity to violence and bloodshed, as are the Olympians Juno (e.g., 10.131), Venus (e.g., 5.157–8), Apollo (e.g., 1.596–604, 627–33), Diana (e.g., 9.665–7), and Bacchus (cf., e.g., 7.211–14). Jupiter plays the critical motivating role in the epic since his stated purpose in instigating the conflict between the Thebans and Argives is the destruction of the Theban and Argive races, and almost every major incident of the poem works toward this end. The fulfillment of his decrees (1.214–47, 3.229–52, 7.6–33) and those of his brother Pluto (8.34–79), with the critical assistance of the Furies (e.g., 1.123–30, 11.150–4, 197–209, 11.383–92, 403–6, 470–95), demands the death and suffering of count-

25 The relevance of many similes to two (e.g., 1.92, 1.479–81) or three (e.g., 1.193–4, 1.370–5) of the central themes of the *Thebaid* accounts for them appearing in two or three of the thematic lists in Appendix C.

26 The lists of similes in Appendix C relevant to each of the main themes are intended to be indicative rather than definitive; in any case, it is impossible for me in a chapter of this length to explain how more than a comparatively small number of similes in these lists are relevant to the themes of the *Thebaid*, but I provide these lists (and those in Appendices A and B) nonetheless for scholars who may wish to do further work on the similes in Statian poetry. In fact, a monograph on Statius' use of similes has the potential to add much to our understanding of their function in the *Thebaid* beyond the scope of this chapter.

less innocent victims, who are caught up in a tragic war incited primarily by malevolent supernatural forces.²⁷

Over one-third of the similes are concerned in some way with the exercise of supernatural power, with many of these showing a divine power intervening to the detriment of humankind and therefore emphasizing the divine motivation behind the episode or scene to which the simile applies. Statius often uses “linking similes” that strengthen the connection between individuals, images, scenes, and circumstances and thereby serve to accentuate the different themes.²⁸ In the first simile of the epic (1.92) Tisiphone responds swiftly to the prayer of Oedipus for vengeance against his sons:

ilicet igne Iouis lapsisque citatior astris
tristibus exsiluit ripis . . .²⁹

THEB. 1.92–3

At once, faster than Jove's fire or falling stars
she leaped up from the gloomy banks . . .

This simile is programmatic in that it immediately links Jupiter with Tisiphone, who are the two prime agents of supernatural destruction in the *Thebaid*.³⁰ Although this simile has been interpreted to mean that Tisiphone is more effective than Jupiter,³¹ it demonstrates only that Tisiphone reacts to the situation more quickly than Jupiter employs his thunderbolt. This simile is followed

27 While Tisiphone and Megaera are instrumental in the fulfilment of Jupiter's grand design for the destruction of the Theban and Argive houses and Pluto's decree commanding Tisiphone to bring about the fratricide, the anthropophagy of Tydeus, Creon's burial ban, and Capaneus' challenge of Jupiter, the Furies are not the most powerful gods in the *Thebaid*, as Gilder (1997) 138–215 *passim* essentially maintains, because they do not control the direction of the narrative but rather help to bring the decrees of Jupiter and Pluto to fulfilment. On the role of Jupiter in the epic, see Dominik (1994b) 2–121 *passim*, esp. 2–33, (2005) 520, (2010a), and (2012a); on the roles of Pluto, Tisiphone, and Megaera, see Dominik (1994b) 33–48, (2005) 520, (2010a), and (2012a).

28 E.g., 1.92, 3.317–23, 6.386, 7.582–3, 11.483 (thunderbolt); 2.675–81, 10.288–92 (sated beast after killing); 3.317–23, specifically 323, 4.24–31, 7.139–44 (sailors); 5.599–604, 6.186–92, 10.820–6 (bereft mother of slain animal); 6.186–92, 10.820–6 (mourning animal); 6.186–92, 11.284–6 (sacrificed animal); 8.593–6, 12.739–40, specifically 740 (lion).

29 The text throughout this chapter (with minor changes in capitalization and punctuation) is that of Shackleton Bailey (2003); all translations are my own.

30 Cf. above, n. 27.

31 Hill (1990) 104.

by the scene in which Jupiter convenes his first council of the gods (1.197–9) in order to proclaim his policy concerning the fate of Thebes and Argos (214–47).³² At the second Olympian council (3.218–59) the force of Jupiter's commands to Mars to incite the cities to war (231–3) and to the other Olympians not to interfere with his plans (239–41) is so powerful that the gods are dumbstruck (253–4). That the scene is intended to serve as an illustration of the divine ruler as an omnipotent autocrat is evident in the brief description following Jupiter's speech. This description features one of the epic's "double similes," whereby two comparisons are made, one immediately after the other—in this case one commencing with the verb *credas* (3.253), the second with *non secus* (2.255).

In the first comparison the force of Jupiter's pronouncement is so overwhelming that the assembled deities are rendered motionless:

dixit, et attoniti iussis; mortalia credas
pectora, sic cuncti uocemque animosque tenebant.

THEB. 3.253–4

He spoke, and they were jolted by his decree. One would have thought their nature was mortal, so curbed were all in voice and spirit.

This simile suggests that the pacific response of the Olympians and lesser powers is out of character: they respond as if they were humans (that is, not at all), not gods; not even Juno dares to challenge this time, as she does in the first Olympian council (1.250–82). The subsequent natural simile, as I have previously argued, is especially effective in drawing attention to the complete dominance of Jupiter over the other gods:³³

non secus ac longa uentorum pace solutum
aequor et imbelli recubant ubi litora somno,
siluarumque comas et abacto flamine nubes
mulcet iners aestas; tunc stagna lacusque sonori
detumuere, tacent exusti solibus amnes.

THEB. 3.255–9

32 Hershkowitz (1995) 59 and (1998) 262 holds that Jupiter's initial decree to destroy the Theban and Argive houses is wholly gratuitous, but his subsequent pronouncements and actions suggest otherwise.

33 Cf. Dominik (1994b) 21 and (2012a) 189–90.

Just as when the long peace of the winds have calmed,
 the sea and the shores lie undisturbed in sleep,
 and the lazy summer soothes woodland leaves and clouds,
 with the breezes driven far away; the ponds and loud lakes
 have subsided and scorched rivers fall silent beneath the sun.

Hill argues that there is nothing in this second simile to suggest Jupiter's omnipotence³⁴ and that the simile refers only to the end of the storm (*longa uentorum pace*, 255), but this is to misinterpret its significance by ignoring the first simile (253–4) and the first two words of the second simile (*non secus*, 255). The phrase *non secus* (255) illustrates that the gods maintain silence in the same way that a storm subsides. Hill asserts that the gods are silent because they know that Jupiter's "bluster" will "blow over," which will allow them to revert to their usual state.³⁵ Not only is there nothing in the text to support this suggestion, but it is also clear that the Olympians are dumbstruck and reduced to mere mortals in the presence of Jupiter. Hill further argues that subsequent events confirm that there is no basis on which to interpret the simile as an analogy for Jupiter's power and control over events,³⁶ but in fact the opposite is repeatedly shown to be the case—here and throughout the epic.³⁷ The natural simile is especially effective in stressing the supremacy of Jupiter over the other gods (3.255–9), a relationship that mirrors the control the divine powers exert over humanity.

When Mars hastens to carry out Jupiter's command to incite the Argives to war, Venus confronts the war-god and attempts to dissuade him from acting unfavorably toward Thebes (260–91). Hill cites Venus' complaint to Mars about the war god's impending action against Thebes (3.269–291) as evidence of Venus' defiance of Jupiter's decree not to interfere with his plan for the

34 Hill (1996b) 40. Nor is it true to say, as Hill (1990) 106 does, that there "really does seem to be no effective authority in the universe, certainly no coherent plan. . . ."

35 Hill (1996b) 40.

36 Hill (1996b) 40.

37 Dominik (1994b) 2, 7–8, 15–21 *passim*, 24, 164; *contra* Feeney (1991) 346–9, 355–7; Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 335–56; Delarue (2000) 290–306. Feeney (1991) 346, 356 suggests that the uncertainty over Jupiter's involvement or inaction and his disappearance from the epic brings his causative role into question, especially when Jupiter disappears completely from the poem—Feeney (1991) 356 cites 11.133–4 as the cosmocrator's last appearance, though he is mentioned at 11.496—but, as with the Furies who retire because they have accomplished their task (cf. 11.537–8), there is no more need of Jupiter. *Contra* Gilder (1997) 187–9, who views Jupiter's departure from the poem as an indication of his complete powerlessness instead of having achieved his destructive objectives.

destruction of Thebes and Argos,³⁸ but she does not actually *do* anything. In any case, Mars responds by contending that the power of Jupiter is so great that he can ill afford to contravene his commands and those of the Fates (304–10); in any event, he proclaims, the course set down by Jupiter cannot be altered (311–12). In an allusion to the aforementioned natural simile that describes Jupiter's omnipotence (255–9), Mars describes how the earth, sky, and sea trembled before the cosmocrator as he spoke (308–9)—hence the subsidence of the storm in the simile—and the gods concealed themselves in procession (309–10). Mars understands that any attempt to oppose the decree of Jupiter would ultimately prove futile. The war god knows that he has a limited degree of freedom to exercise his power, provided that his actions are in accordance with the will of Jupiter. Therefore Mars is able to promise Venus that he will assist the Theban forces on the battlefield in the forthcoming war with Argos (312–315); while he declares he can do this because it does not contravene the wishes of the Fates (316; cf. 304–5), the narrative (e.g., 1.212–13) and various characters (e.g., Amphiaraus, 3.471, 488) show Jupiter as the chief authority of human destiny.³⁹

Hill interprets the simile following Mars' speech to mean that he is the equal of Jupiter:⁴⁰

sic orsus aperto
flagrantes immisit equos. non ocius alti
in terras cadit ira Iouis, siquando niualem
Othryn et Arctoae gelidum caput institit Ossae
armauitque in nube manum: uolat ignea moles
saeua dei mandata ferens, caelumque trisulca
territat omne coma iamdudum aut ditibus agris
signa dare aut ponto miseros inuoluere nautas.

THEB. 3.316–23, ESP. 317–23

So speaking he spurred his
flaming steeds into the open. Not more swiftly does the
wrath of high Jove fall to earth when he has stood on snowy
Othrys and the cold peak of Arctic Ossa
and armed his hand in the cloud. The fiery mass flies,
bearing the cruel command of the god, and frightens for long

38 Hill (1996b) 40.

39 Dominik (1994b) 25–29.

40 Hill (1996b) 41.

all heaven with three-forked tail, to give a sign
to fruitful fields or to overwhelm wretched sailors at sea.

There is no questioning Mars' warmaking abilities: on numerous occasions he is shown destroying cities or inflaming or coercing people and even goddesses to violence.⁴¹ But this natural simile merely illustrates that Mars drives his flaming horses no less quickly than an angry Jupiter hurls his fiery thunderbolt with its cruel mandate. This simile is reminiscent of the earlier simile in which Tisiphone responds more quickly to Oedipus' prayer than Jupiter's thunderbolt flies through the air (1.92). In both situations Jupiter's response is no faster than that of his fellow gods, but this does not mean that he is less effective in his exercise of power.⁴²

Contrary to being the equal of Jupiter, Mars in his role of *agent provocateur* is frequently shown acting directly under the order of the cosmocrator (e.g., 3.575–7; 7.10–33, 81; cf. 3.234–5). In fact, these aforementioned natural similes (1.92, 3.317–23), though they stress the speed of Tisiphone's response and of Mars' descent to earth (3.316–18), draw attention to Jupiter's anger (3.318), cruelty (cf. 3.321), frightening aspect (3.322), and destructive nature (1.92; 3.320, 323). These are just two of a few dozen similes involving nature that serve as an illustration of the effects of the exercise of divine power upon humanity,⁴³ which is portrayed as being helpless before the machinations of the gods.

Abuse of Monarchal Power

The attitude of Statius toward the institution of monarchy is unequivocal even though the motivation for the actions of monarchs in the *Thebaid* is usually attributable to the harmful intercession of supernatural powers, which the similes often emphasize. The picture of monarchy that emerges from the epic is predominantly negative despite the generally favorable portrait of Adrastus and the ambiguous presentation of Theseus. This negative impression is based mostly upon the conduct of Eteocles and Creon, with occasional references to actions of previous monarchs such as Oedipus and Laius. A cruel and oppressive institution, monarchy inflicts widespread and long-standing

41 E.g., 3.220–1, 420–1, 430–1, 577–593; 7.81–4, 105–139, esp. 131–9; 7.234–6, 703–4; 8.383–7; 9.566–7, 841–2; cf. 7.22–5, 41–62, 172–4, 695–8.

42 Cf. Dominik (2012a) 190, 195.

43 E.g., 1.193–4, 1.370–5, 1.479–81, 2.105–7, 2.193–5, 3.22–30, 3.56–7, 3.671–6, 4.705–10, 5.390–3, 6.51–3, 6.107–10, 6.298–300, 6.451–3, 7.709–10, 7.744–9, 7.791–3, 7.804–7, 8.358–62, 8.423–7, 8.460–5, 9.27–31, 9.141–3, 9.360–62, 9.401–3, 9.460–1, 9.508–9, 9.523–5, 10.13–14, 10.182–6, 10.864–9, 11.114–18, 11.520–3, 12.12–14.

suffering upon subjects who are largely innocent of any wrongdoing. Major episodes (1.164–95, 2.384–3.113, 10.268–314, 11.648–761)—the first two accompanied by a suitable apostrophe or editorial comment (1.165–8, 3.99–113)—exemplify Statius' hostile attitude toward the inevitable tyranny of monarchy. In each scene words of reproach directed at the reigning monarch by one of his subjects represent the hostility of the populace toward their ruler. A vivid picture of the lust for *nuda potestas* ("raw power," 1.150) and its destructive consequences is framed around the claim of Polynices to the throne and determination of Eteocles to maintain sovereignty over Thebes. The debasement of the brothers results from Polynices' insatiable quest for monarchical power (see 1.314–23, 2.307–21, 4.88–9) and Eteocles' abuse of his position and desire to retain the throne (see 2.399). This picture of a corrupt monarchy extends to Eteocles' predecessors and successor. The actions of Oedipus, Laius, and Creon are consistent with the pattern of monarchical cruelty established over successive generations of rule in Thebes.

About one-fifth of the similes aid in developing the theme of the abuse of monarchical power in the epic. Even though these similes depict the pursuit and use of monarchical power on some level, the use of animal and sea-storm images often occurs in situations whereby stress is laid on the intervention of the gods who incite man to violence, including Eteocles and Polynices, and the consequent position of humankind as a victim of the gods' machination.⁴⁴ Bull similes (e.g., 1.131–6, 2.323–30, 11.251–6) and a prophetic metaphor featuring opposing bulls (4.397–404)⁴⁵ represent the rivalry of the Theban brothers and their violent struggle for the throne of Thebes, though taurine similes are used in other contexts too (e.g., Tydeus on his return to Argos, 3.330–5; Adrastus as a respected leader, 5.69–73). Similes likening Eteocles to a tigress (2.128–32) and snake (2.411–14, 11.310–4) and his subjects to *capta armenta* ("a captured herd," 2.328) highlight his agency as a usurper of monarchical power for his divinely motivated refusal to fulfil the pact of alternate rule with Polynices (cf. 1.123–43, 2.89–133). When Polynices mourns the death of Tydeus, who serves as a fraternal model (cf. *alius . . . ac melior . . . frater*, "other and better

44 See below, "Consequences of the Abuse of Power," pp. 283–5.

45 4.397–404 is technically a metaphor instead of a simile because Eteocles and Polynices are depicted *as* bulls instead of being *compared to* bulls, though there are numerous prophetic similes elsewhere in the epic: 1.475–7, 1.535–6, 2.165–6, 2.236–43, 4.828–30, 5.92–4, 5.599–604, 6.320–5, 6.451–3, 6.457, 6.596–7, 6.665–7, 8.674–6, 9.858–60. I do not subscribe to the view prevalent among contemporary scholars (e.g., Sharrock [1996] 127 and Fludernik, D. Freeman, and M. Freeman [1997] 385) that simile and metaphor are basically the same rhetorical figure.

brother," 9.83), he is likened to a bull that has lost his yoked partner (82–5). Eteocles responds indignantly to his real brother's challenge to a duel like a bull hearing his rival's hostile lowing (11.251–6). Statius extends these specific taurine representations of the rivalry between the brothers to a more general simile of the consequences of the loss of a strong monarch for the rest of a herd when the chief bull (*regem*, "king," 5.338) is slain by a lion (330–4). A lupine image is used to describe the effect of Eteocles' actions upon Thebes as being similar to the plundering of a sheep pen (4.363–8).

Nautical and storm-at-sea similes also figure prominently in the evolution of the power struggle between Eteocles and Polynices. Early in the epic Eteocles and Polynices are likened to winds pulling a ship in opposite directions (1.193–4), which recalls an earlier simile in which the bulls representing the brothers do the same (1.131–6).⁴⁶ Polynices is depicted as being fearful of Eteocles just as a mariner who is caught in a storm fears the rocks and cliffs (1.370–5). Eteocles is portrayed as an idle skipper unaware of an impending storm (2.105–7), which consists of Polynices' steps to seize the throne (cf. 108–14), and as a captain who loses control of his ship in a storm (3.22–30), while the cry of the Theban mothers who spot Maeon returning to Argos in the wake of Tydeus' monomachy is compared to the yell raised before a ship sinks at sea (3.57). The depiction of Eteocles and Polynices as vulnerable seafarers at the mercy of the sea not only is consistent with the general impression conveyed in the epic of a hostile natural environment but also with the brothers having little control over their destinies and being unable to guide the "ship of state." Finally, during their duel Eteocles and Polynices are described as being similar to ships the wind has caused to interlock and to sink together in a storm to the ocean floor (11.520–3). For the brothers the storm represents the supernaturally inspired series of events that leads to their fratricide, which itself is instigated by the Furies (11.57–579 *passim*) at the behest of Pluto (8.69–71) and therefore promotes Jupiter's grand design of destruction (cf. 1.214–47, 285–302; 3.229–52, 295–316; 7.6–33, 195–221).⁴⁷

The actions of Adrastus and Theseus do not on the surface conform to the pattern of tyrannical monarchy established in the rest of the poem. But the monarchs are not immune from destructive influences. Statius occasionally emphasizes the benevolence, piety, and self-restraint of Adrastus as well as the civilizing role of Theseus, but overall this plays a relatively minor part in the presentation of institutional monarchy in the poem. In fact Statius extends his despairing picture of institutional monarchy to include the actions

46 See below, pp. 283–4.

47 See further Dominik (1994b) 33–48, esp. 36–39, (2010a) 132–6, 138–9, and (2012a) 191–194.

of these seemingly just and benevolent regents; for not even they are untainted by the madness that afflicts participants in war. Adrastus ignores omens that portend disaster for Argos by warring against Thebes (cf. 3.456–8, 499–551, 619–47) and enthusiastically sanctions the cowardly nocturnal attack on the Theban camp in which the victims are mercilessly slain while sleeping (10.227–44, esp. 236–44; 10.266–8). Theseus, though his cause in acting on behalf of Thebes seems just (cf. 12.711–14), shows a similar eagerness for the slaughter of war (12.595). When the Athenians mow down the helpless Thebans on the battlefield, Theseus is at the forefront of the conflict and wreaks destruction among the Thebans on the battlefield. The Athenian monarch easily slays a multitude of Theban warriors (741–51), including Creon, whom he dispatches quickly without showing a trace of mercy (768–82).

Theseus' treatment of women and violent undertaking of war against Thebes, as I have already maintained, introduces a disturbing aspect into the notion of a just ruler.⁴⁸ Associations and comparisons of Theseus with malevolent divinities (e.g., 12.650–5, 787–8), cruel monarchs (e.g., 8.53–4), fierce warriors (cf. 12.736–7; 8.583–96, esp. 593–6), ferocious beasts (e.g., 12.601–5), and female barbarians (e.g., 12.535–9, esp. 538–9) suggest that his just war against Thebes is not all it appears to be on the surface. The specific comparisons between Theseus and the deities Jupiter (12.650–55), Mars (733–5), and Bacchus (787–8) link the Athenian monarch closely with the malevolent and destructive gods. The first comparison likens the aggressive manner of Theseus' departure to the violent oncoming of winter effected by Jupiter:

dixit, et emissa praeceps iter incohat hasta:
 qualis Hyperboreos ubi nubilus institit axes
 Iuppiter et prima tremefecit sidera bruma,
 rumpitur Aeolia et longam indignata quietem
 tollit Hiems animos uentosaque sibilat Arctos;
 tunc montes undaeque fremunt, tunc proelia caecis
 nubibus et tonitrus insanaque fulmina gaudent.

THEB. 12.649–55, *ESP.* 650–55

He spoke and, hurling his spear, began his journey in haste.
 So when Jupiter stands in the clouds upon the Northern pole
 and causes the stars to tremble with the onset of winter,
 Aeolia is torn asunder and the storm, begrudging
 its long peace, takes courage and the windy Arctic whistles;

48 Dominik (1994b) 76–9, 92–8, (2005) 520–1; cf. Ahl (1986) 2894–8, Coffee (2009a).

then mountains and waves roar; then battles are waged in the
blind clouds and thunder and mad lightning make joyous havoc.

Vessey argues that this simile shows that Theseus, as a devotee of justice and the rule of law, is a human reflection of the supreme deity.⁴⁹ While there is nothing specifically in the simile to suggest that Theseus is an exemplar of justice and law, the simile does suggest that the human role of the monarch corresponds to the divine role of the cosmocrator—but in its disagreeable aspects. Jupiter and his human counterpart are harsh and unrelenting in their manner and they encourage the perpetration of violence—with the inevitable consequences of human suffering that result—in executing their plans.

Animal imagery undermines the surface presentation of Theseus as a just and benevolent king. The fabric of the narrative in the second half of book twelve is interwoven with such symbolic images as monsters, serpents, bulls, and lions. These images interact with other images elsewhere in the *Thebaid* to impart and derive meaning, as instanced by the image-symbol of the bull. The bull simile, which is used to describe the conduct of Eteocles and Polynices, is now used to refer to Theseus as he undertakes war with Thebes. Theseus is compared to a conquering bull who willingly defends his brides and pasture despite the wounds he has endured in a recent struggle with another challenger:

sic ait oblitus bellique uiaeque laborum,
hortaturque suos uiresque instaurat anhelas:
ut modo conubiis taurus saltuque recepto
cum posuit pugnas, alio si forte remugit
bellatore nemus, quamquam ora et colla cruento
imbre madent, nouus arma parat campumque lacessens
dissimulat gemitus et uulnera puluere celat.

THEB. 12.599–605, ESP. 601–5

So he speaks and, forgetting the labors of war and the march,
exhorts his men and renews their panting strength.
So when a bull has regained his brides and pasture and
ceased fighting, if by chance another warrior bellows
from the forest, though his head and neck are soaked with
bloody rain, he prepares anew his arms and, pawing the plain,
suppresses his groans and conceals his wounds with dust.

49 Vessey (1973) 314–15.

Here Theseus prepares for battle after his war against the Amazons. While the bull imagery in this passage emphasizes the determination of the bull to protect his territory more than it suggests his brute force and savagery, the use of a taurine simile to describe the conduct of the Athenian monarch associates him with other human figures who are portrayed unfavorably in the *Thebaid*. For taurine similes are used in earlier passages to describe the actions of the brutal Tydeus (e.g., 3.330–5), ruthless Eteocles (e.g., 11.251–6), and power-starved Polynices (e.g., 2.323–30, 9.82–5). This comparison of Theseus with a bull assumes additional significance when a little later his shield depicts him in his traditional role as the slayer of the Minotaur (12.665–71), a representation that further undercuts any positive aspect of the simile. In the final book Theseus the bull slayer generally acts like a bull himself in his eagerness to engage in battle,⁵⁰ which suggests he is attracted as much by the prospect of fighting with Creon as he is interested in upholding natural law.⁵¹

Theseus on the surface seems far superior to any of the Seven and supremely confident in his own powers. But when the battle commences he is portrayed in terms similar to the descriptions of Tydeus and other chief warriors among the Seven, whose indomitable nature and fearlessness are highlighted in the main battle narrative (7–11). His destructive propensity is highlighted in a comparison with the war-god Mars whose brutal conduct he mirrors in battle:

Ut uero aequoreus quercum Marathonida Theseus
 extulit, erectae cuius crudelis in hostes
 umbra cadit campumque trucem lux cuspidis implet,
 ceu pater Edonios Haemi de uertice Mauors
 impulerit currus, rapido mortemque fugamque
 axe uehens, sic exanimis in terga reducit
 pallor Agenoridas.

THEB. 12.730–6, ESP. 733–5

But when sea-born Theseus held forth his Marathonian spear,
 whose cruel shadow as he raised it fell upon the enemy
 and the gleam of the spear-point filled the grim field;
 as though father Mars drove his Edonian chariot from
 Haemus' peak bearing death and flight on the rushing wheels,
 so pale fear drives the panic-stricken sons of Agenor in flight.

50 Cf. Ahl (1986) 2895.

51 Dominik (1994b) 96.

Vessey contends that this comparison highlights Theseus' godlike qualities and his superhuman role as a "divine man" whose moral objective is to defend righteousness.⁵² Ripoll similarly maintains that Theseus represents the force of law against the forces of impiety, is a representative of human virtue, and serves as a substitute for the absent gods to restore the values of humanity.⁵³ While Ripoll downplays the effect of this simile partly by arguing that the comparison is indirect since it merely compares the *actions* of Theseus with Mars rather than, as a metaphor would, actually equate these figures with each other,⁵⁴ elsewhere he asserts that the Athenian monarch acts as a surrogate Mars.⁵⁵ Indeed the combined effect of this comparison with Mars (733–5), the sinister implications of which are manifest, and of the earlier comparison of Theseus with Jupiter (649–55) serves to associate the violent actions of this human ruler negatively with the wanton destructiveness of his divine counterparts.

The contempt of Theseus for the common soldiery of Thebes and his refusal to engage in their slaughter (736–7) recall the brutal Tydeus, whose pride prevents him from plundering the youthful Atys and compels him to express a preference for more worthy victims (8.587–91; cf. 583–5, 592–3). Animal imagery—specifically a leonine simile (12.740; cf. 2.675–81, 8.474–5, 8.593–6, 9.189–95)—links the two heroes:

taedet fugientibus uti
Thesea, nec facilem dignatur dextra cruorem.
cetera plebeio desaeuit sanguine uirtus:
sic iuuat exanimis proiectaque praeda canesque
degeneresque lupos, magnos alit ira leones.

THEB. 12.736–40, ESP. 739–40

Theseus is weary to do battle
with fugitives and his hand scorns easy blood.
The others' valor exhausts its rage in common butchery;
so lifeless and fallen prey delight dogs and cowardly wolves,
while anger feeds mighty lions.

52 Vessey (1993) 315.

53 Ripoll (1998a) 177–8.

54 Ripoll (1998a) 177.

55 Ripoll (1998a) 178.

The comparison serves much the same purpose as those stressing the similarity between the conduct of Theseus and behavior of a battle-worn bull (12.601–5), harsh Jupiter (649–55), and savage Mars (733–6), which is to suggest that the violent and destructive actions of Theseus resemble in some degree the irrationality and inhumanity of Tydeus, who commits the divinely inspired anthropophagy (8.751–66, esp. 757–8; cf. 11.85–8, esp. 88; 8.71–2); this anthropophagy is one of a number of scenes whose grotesque nature is enhanced through the use of similes (9.10–11, 9.27–31; cf. 3.140–6, 11.587–92). Hill dismisses the disturbing implications of the comparison between Theseus and lions suggested by the leonine anger that gives him strength to slay greater prey (12.739–40).⁵⁶ He argues that the comparison is designed to contrast the leonine superiority of Theseus in comparison with Theseus' troops, who are compared to dogs and degenerate wolves.⁵⁷ But the animal images in this simile represent both the behavior of the Athenian army *and* their leader: the troops sate their rage in common slaughter (12.738) and are compared unfavorably to dogs and cowardly wolves who rejoice in timid prey (739), while the anger that feeds Theseus gives him leonine strength to slay greater prey (740). This simile depicting the wrath of Theseus and his troops (12.738, 740) is only one of a number of similes in the *Thebaid* that emphasize characters' emotions (e.g., 10.622–3, 12.66–7), especially animalistic anger (e.g., 2.469–75, 7.529–32, 12.356–8). Although the image of a lion representing Theseus is more positive than the canine and lupine imagery associated with his troops, this comparatively favorable connotation is undermined by his subsequent actions on the battlefield.

According to Ripoll, the actions of Theseus are less deadly than psychological in their effect since the list of his victims is brief and presented without pathos (741–6).⁵⁸ But Theseus, proving false his expression of disdain for taking easy victims (736–7), strikes down no fewer than *seven* warriors in quick succession with considerable ease and barely misses an eighth warrior with his spear (741–51). When Theseus confronts Creon, he quickly slays his Theban counterpart without showing even a trace of mercy (768–81). Ripoll maintains that the context of Theseus waging a just war with the aim of restoring peace and justice not only renders the violence morally neutral but also removes any hint of negative characterization in the simile, with the result that the Athenian monarch achieves the status of the quintessential epic hero.⁵⁹ Similarly Vessey

⁵⁶ Hill (1996b) 53.

⁵⁷ Hill (1996b) 53.

⁵⁸ Ripoll (1998a) 177.

⁵⁹ Ripoll (1998a) 177–8.

views Theseus as a model of a just and compassionate monarch, while Braund considers him to be the self-sufficient good king.⁶⁰ While Theseus' purpose of ensuring the burial of the Argive corpses would seem to justify the violent means of its attainment,⁶¹ the concentration in the narrative upon the negative consequences of a seemingly just war—as shown in the pathetic plight of the victims (730–51) and the suffering of the survivors (797–809)—serves to undermine considerably not only the ideal of such a war but also the surface portrayal of Theseus as a truly just king.

Consequences of the Abuse of Power

Statius goes to considerable lengths to establish a consistent picture of the powerlessness and suffering of the human race in an oppressive universe. The Thebans and Argives are largely portrayed as the innocent and helpless victims of a war instigated by Jupiter (e.g., 1.241–6; cf. 1.224–5, 3.248–51) to destroy their races. The gruesome and sorrowful consequences of the pursuit and abuse of power on the supernatural and human levels are manifest throughout the *Thebaid*, with over one-fifth of the similes illustrating the consequences of this abuse of power. The opening words of the epic—*fraternas acies* (“fraternal strife,” 1.1)—allude to violence directed against one's own flesh and blood, which for Statius constitutes the nadir of human conflict and serves as a symbol for civil war. While the image of the bull is used to describe the bellicose actions of figures such as Tydeus (e.g., 330–5), Theseus (e.g., 12.601–5) and the brothers Polynices (e.g., 2.323–30, 9.82–5) and Eteocles (e.g., 11.251–6), the brothers are also likened to bulls rebelling under the same yoke and pulling in opposite directions:

sic ubi delectos per torua armenta iuencos
agricola imposito sociare affectat aratro,
illi indignantes, quis nondum uomere multo
ardua nodosos ceruix descendit in armos,
in diuersa trahunt atque aequis uincula laxant
uiribus et uario confundunt limite sulcos.

THEB. 1.131–6

So when a farmer tries to yoke two bullocks chosen from
the savage herd beneath the plowshare, they are indignant,
for their proud necks have not yet bowed to the level

60 Vessey (1973) 312; Braund (1996a) 16.

61 Cf. Vessey (1973) 315; Hill (1996b) 53; Zimmerman (1993) 259.

of their brawny shoulders under many a plowshare.
 They pull in various ways and loosen their bonds with equal
 strength as they confound the furrows with their separate tracks.

This taurine simile illustrates the impossibility of the brothers sharing monarchical rule with each other, but the passages that frame the simile portray them as victims of supernatural power: Tisiphone sets upon and infuses the brothers with jealousy and hatred of each other and an insatiable lust for power (1.123–30), while Discordia inflames them against each other (1.137–8; cf. 2.288, 5.74, 7.50).

Elsewhere Statius focuses on the consequences of violence and its worst horrors, as is suggested in the violent atmosphere, gory descriptions, and tragic results of the fighting that takes place. The use of animal and sea-storm images often occur in situations whereby stress is laid not only on the intercession of the gods who incite various human figures to violence but also their consequent position as victims of the gods' plans and actions. The image of the human who suffers as the result of supernatural machination, control, or action is used in numerous animal similes to stress the consequences of violence and warfare, as when the Lemnian women are compared to cattle (5.203–5, 330–4, 349); Menoeceus, whom Eurydice views as being a victim of Eteocles (11.283), is compared to a sacrificial sheep (284–6); victims in battle are compared to cattle slain by wild beasts (3.45–52, 7.670–4, 8.593–6, 8.691–4, 10.288–92); and when such victims are likened to sheep (2.675–81, 8.474–5, 8.572–6) and deer (7.670–4). Statius also uses similes to enhance the atmosphere of particular scenes, such as when martial violence or the helpless position of humankind is reflected in similes of wild beasts killing cattle, sheep, or deer.⁶²

This image of the human as a victim or under the control of supernatural powers is further enhanced by similes showing various human figures overwhelmed by or subject to adverse natural elements, mainly storms, as when Ismenos assails Hippomedon (9.460–1); floods, as when Hercules and Minerva aid Haemon and Tydeus respectively (8.460–5); and winds, as when Tisiphone

62 1.105–6, 1.419–20, 2.411–14, 2.469–75, 2.563–4, 2.595–601, 2.675–81, 3.45–52, 3.140–6, 3.432–9, 3.604–5, 4.24–31, 4.139–44, 4.312, 4.550–1, 4.828–30, 5.261–4, 5.426–30, 5.529–33, 6.306, 6.422, 6.457, 6.578–82, 6.753–4, 6.777–8, 7.787–8, 6.854–7, 7.477, 7.529–32, 7.560–1, 7.599–600, 7.670–4, 8.255–8, 8.474–5, 8.532–5, 8.532–5, 8.544–7, 8.572–6, 8.593–6, 8.616–20, 8.674–6, 8.691–4, 9.10–11, 9.27–31, 9.115–19, 9.220–2, 9.533–6, 9.554–6, 9.739–43, 9.858–60, 10.42–8, 10.288–92, 10.414–19, 10.574–9, 10.619, 10.622–3, 10.820–6, 11.27–31, 11.193–5, 11.234–8, 11.310–4, 11.530–4, 11.587–92, 11.644–7, 12.15–21, 12.107, 12.224–7, 12.356–8, 12.433–5, 12.739–40.

and Megaera spur on Polynices and Eteocles respectively against each other (11.114–18; cf. 108–13) and when the dueling brothers are likened to ships that the wind has caused to clash and sink (11.520–3). In the rare instance that a simile depicting the hostility, violence, and destruction of nature is used where no direct intercession on the part of a higher power can be traced (5.390–3), the effect is much the same in terms of the theme of human vulnerability in a hostile universe. In addition, the pathos of particular scenes involving death and potential loss is stressed through the use of similes (e.g., 8.544–7, 10.574–9).

The mass destruction and suffering caused by the fighting that takes place in the *Thebaid* is evidence of the futility of war since little seems to be achieved and virtually no one emerges unscathed from its devastating effects. The tragic consequences of war are evident in the deaths of men of all ages and from every walk of life. The women, children, elderly, and infirm are left only to vent their grief and bear their losses (12.877–807), thus giving final emphasis to the ultimate futility of human violence and bloodshed. The use of similes in these and other scenes illustrates the general powerlessness of humankind and its lack of free will in a world dominated by malevolent and uncaring deities.

Conclusion

Statius uses the simile largely to develop the major themes of the *Thebaid* concerning the abuse of supernatural power, the abuse of monarchical power, and the consequences of the abuse of power. In suggesting similitude between people, objects, and actions, the Statian simile not only plays a significant role in stressing one or more of these major themes but also fulfils a number of other functions such as heightening the atmosphere of a specific scene, commenting upon the dramatic situation, prophesying or foreshadowing an event, describing the character or emotions of a particular individual or group, serving as a linking device between different passages, and enlivening or embellishing the narrative. Many of the similes appear to be of proximate and complex signification; that is, they are not only relevant to their immediate context, but they also serve two or more of the aforementioned functions. Admittedly the function of some similes seems principally to embellish the narrative with pleasant or striking images (e.g., 7.638–9, 9.242–7, 10.458–62), though even some of these serve other functions as well (e.g., 6.578–82, 6.854–7, 11.443–6). All the same, where there are debates about what the major issues of the *Thebaid* are, the majority of similes help to resolve these by drawing attention to and stressing the destructive machinations of the gods; the divinely inspired actions of

humans, especially monarchs; and the disastrous consequences of the actions of the higher powers.⁶³

Appendix A

The following is a list of the 236 similes identified in the *Thebaid* (with signifier or marker in parentheses).

Book 1

1.92 (*citator*), 1.105–6 (*qualis*), 1.131–6 (*sic*), 1.193–4 (*qualiter*), 1.370–5 (*uelut*), 1.419–20 (*instar*), 1.421–4 (*non aliter*), 1.475–7 (*quantus*), 1.479–81 (*ut*), 1.485–7 (*in speciem*), 1.535–6 (*aequa*).

Book 2

2.81–8 (*qualis*), 2.105–7 (*uelut*), 2.128–32 (*qualis*), 2.165–6 (*nec plura*), 2.193–5 (*nec minus*), 2.236–43 (*non secus*), 2.323–30 (*uelut*), 2.411–14 (*uelut*), 2.469–75 (*sic*), 2.491–3 (*ceu*), 2.553–4 (*ut*), 2.559–60 (*uix ualeant*), 2.563–4 (*qualis*), 2.595–601 (*non aliter*), 2.675–81 (*ut*).

Book 3

3.22–30 (*uelut*), 3.45–52 (*haud aliter*), 3.56–7 (*qualis*), 3.140–6 (*haud aliter*), 3.253–4 (*credas*), 3.255–9 (*non secus*), 3.317–23 (*non ocus*), 3.330–5 (*sic*), 3.356 (*ceu*), 3.432–9 (*qualis*), 3.594–7 (*quantus*), 3.604–5 (*ut*), 3.671–6 (*ut*).

Book 4

4.24–31 (*sic*), 4.69–73 (*ut*), 4.95–100 (*ceu*), 4.139–44 (*non aliter*), 4.312 (*pernicior*), 4.315–16 (*uelut*), 4.363–8 (*uelut*), 4.494–9 (*qualis*), 4.550–1 (*qualis*), 4.705–10 (*sic*), 4.744–5 (*ceu*), 4.789–92 (*qualis*), 4.801–3 (*sic*), 4.812–15 (*sic*), 4.828–30 (*putes*). [including bracketed lines 716–22]

Book 5

5.11–16 (*qualis*), 5.92–4 (*uelut*), 5.144–6 (*putes*), 5.165–9 (*qualis*), 5.203–5 (*non aliter*), 5.231–3 (*ut*), 5.261–4 (*non saeuus*), 5.330–4 (*sic*), 5.338–9 (*credas*), 5.349 (*more*), 5.390–3

63 I thank not only my co-editors Carole Newlands (University of Colorado, Boulder) and Kyle Gervais (University of Western Ontario) but also my other colleagues John Garthwaite (University of Otago) and James Holland (Texas Tech University) for commenting upon this chapter and making a number of helpful suggestions.

(*talīs*), 5.426–30 (*sic*), 5.529–33 (*quantus*), 5.543 (*qualis*), 5.560–1 (*quo quondam*), 5.593 (*in morem*), 5.599–604 (*uelut*), 5.704–9 (*sic*), 5.723 (*uelut*).

Book 6

6.19–24 (*ceu*), 6.51–3 (*non mollius quam*), 6.107–10 (*sic*), 6.114–17 (*ut*), 6.186–92 (*non secus*), 6.253–4 (*non tanta*), 6.298–300 (*ceu*), 6.306 (*par*), 6.320–5 (*sic*), 6.386 (*ocior*), 6.407 (*minor*), 6.408–9 (*tardius*), 6.422–3 (*non crebrior*), 6.451–3 (*uelut*), 6.457 (*credas*), 6.483 (*ut*), 6.521 (*ocior*), 6.578–82 (*sic*), 6.596 (*credas*), 6.598–601 (*non aliter*), 6.665–7 (*qualis*), 6.685–8 (*sic*), 6.715 (*ceu*), 6.716–18 (*quale*), 6.719–21 (*sic*), 6.753–4 (*quantus*), 6.777–8 (*ut*), 6.787 (*tantum*), 6.799 (*sic*), 6.806 (*quantus*), 6.854–7 (*uelut*), 6.864–7 (*non sic*), 6.868–9 (*sic*), 6.880–5 (*haud aliter*), 6.893–6 (*sic*). [including bracketed lines 719–21]

Book 7

7.86–9 (*ut*), 7.139–44 (*sic*), 7.223–6 (*ut*), 7.268 (*qualis*), 7.393–7 (*sic*), 7.436–40 (*uelut*), 7.477 (*uelut*), 7.529–32 (*qualis*), 7.560–1 (*ceu*), 7.582–3 (*ceu*), 7.599–600 (*putes*), 7.625–7 (*ut*), 6.638–9 (*ceu*), 6.670–4 (*qualis*), 7.709–10 (*ceu*), 7.744–9 (*sic*), 7.791–3 (*non aliter*), 7.804–7 (*sic*).

Book 8

8.82–3 (*non fortius*), 8.124–6 (*ut*), 8.209–10 (*ceu*), 8.212–14 (*sic*), 8.237–9 (*ceu*), 8.255–8 (*qualis*), 8.267–70 (*sic*), 8.286–93 (*sicut*), 8.358–62 (*qualis*), 8.369–72 (*uelut*), 8.407–11 (*tantus*), 8.423–7 (*ut*), 8.460–5 (*qualiter*), 8.474–5 (*uelut*), 8.532–6 (*qualis*), 8.544–7 (*sic*), 8.572–6 (*sic*), 8.593–6 (*uelut*), 8.616–20 (*sic*), 8.674–6 (*nec segnius*), 8.691–4 (*sic*), 8.749–50 (*qualis*).

Book 9

9.10–11 (*quam si*), 9.27–31 (*non aliter*), 9.82–5 (*qualis*), 9.91–4 (*ceu*), 9.115–119 (*sic*), 9.141–3 (*uelut*), 9.189–95 (*sic*), 9.220–2 (*talīs*), 9.242–7 (*qualis*), 9.328–31 (*non blandior*), 9.360–2 (*sic*), 9.401–3 (*qualiter*), 9.437–8 (*non tanto*), 9.438–9 (*non altius*), 9.460–1 (*instar*), 9.508–9 (*ceu*), 9.523–5 (*ceu*), 9.533–6 (*qualis*), 9.554–6 (*haud alius*), 9.739–43 (*ut*), 9.858–60 (*ut*).

Book 10

10.13–14 (*ceu*), 10.42–8 (*sic*), 10.170–5 (*sic*), 10.182–6 (*non secus*), 10.228–34 (*sic*), 10.246–8 (*non aliter*), 10.288–92 (*non aliter*), 10.373–5 (*sic*), 10.414–19 (*ut*), 10.458–62 (*sic*), 10.470 (*qui*), 10.511–12 (*quantus*), 10.537–9 (*qualiter*), 10.574–9 (*sic*), 10.601–3 (*in speciem*), 10.619 (*non secus*), 10.622–3 (*qualis*), 10.646–9 (*sic*), 10.674–5 (*haud citius*), 10.820–6 (*sic*), 10.849–52 (*qualis*), 10.854–5 (*ceu*), 10.864–9 (*ut*), 10.915–17 (*putes*).

Book 11

11.7–8 (*ceu*), 11.12–15 (*quantus*), 11.27–31 (*ut*), 11.42–4 (*ceu*), 11.114–18 (*ut*), 11.193–5 (*uelut*), 11.218–19 (*ceu*), 11.234–8 (*qualis*), 11.251–6 (*sic*), 11.274 (*ceu*), 11.284–6 (*ceu*), 11.310–14 (*ut*), 11.318–20 (*qualis*), 11.437–8 (*non magis quam*), 11.443–6 (*qualis*), 11.461 (*ceu*), 11.483 (*ocior*), 11.520–3 (*ut*), 11.530–4 (*uelut*), 11.587–92 (*qualis*), 11.644–7 (*qualis*), 11.741–7 (*qualis*).

Book 12

12.12–13 (*ut*), 12.15–21 (*sic*), 12.66–7 (*haud aliter*), 12.107 (*ceu*), 12.155–7 (*citius*), 12.169–72 (*non secus*), 12.224–7 (*uelut*), 12.270–7 (*qualis*), 12.356–8 (*quo*), 12.413–14 (*sic*), 12.433–5 (*uelut*), 12.478–80 (*non plura*), 12.515–18 (*ceu*), 12.559 (*ceu*), 12.601–5 (*ut*), 12.650–5 (*qualis*), 12.728–9 (*uelut*), 12.733–5 (*ceu*), 12.739–40 (*sic*), 12.787–8 (*qualis*), 12.791–3 (*qualis*).

Appendix B

This appendix lists the most common and thematically relevant types of similes in the *Thebaid*.

Divine and Human Mythological Figures

1.475–7, 1.485–7, 1.535–6, 2.165–6, 2.236–43, 2.595–601, 3.317–23, 3.432–9, 4.550–1, 4.789–92, 4.801–3, 5.92–4, 5.144–6, 5.426–30, 5.704–9, 6.51–3, 6.320–5, 6.665–7, 6.578–82, 6.719–21 (bracketed lines), 6.893–6, 7.477, 8.82–3, 8.209–10, 8.212–14, 8.237–9, 8.255–8, 8.407–11, 8.616–20, 8.749–50, 9.328–31, 9.360–2, 9.401–3, 9.438–9, 10.170–5, 10.246–8, 10.373–5, 10.646–9, 10.854–5, 10.915–17, 11.218–19, 11.234–8, 11.318–20, 11.443–6, 11.587–92, 11.664–7, 12.66–7, 12.155–7, 12.224–7, 12.270–7, 12.413–14, 12.433–5, 12.478–80, 12.559, 12.650–5, 12.733–5.

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1.479–81, 3.317–23, 3.432–9, 4.24–31, 4.812–15, 5.704–9, 6.19–24, 6.483–4, 6.451–3, 6.777–8, 6.799–801, 6.806–7, 7.560–1, 8.212–14, 8.267–70, 8.369–72, 9.91–4, 9.360–2, 10.182–6, 10.246–8, 10.622–3, 11.437–8, 12.650–5.

Ships in Storms

1.193–4, 1.370–5, 2.105–7, 2.193–5, 3.22–30, 3.56–7, 3.255–9, 6.51–3, 7.86–9, 7.139–44, 7.791–3, 7.804–7, 9.141–3, 9.460–1, 9.523–5, 10.13–14, 10.537–9, 11.114–18, 11.520–3, 12.12–13.

Other Natural Elements

1.92, 1.105–6, 1.419–20, 3.45–52, 3.317–23, 3.594–7, 3.671–6, 4.95–100, 4.312, 4.494–9, 4.705–10, 4.744–5, 5.330–4, 5.338–9, 5.390–3, 5.426–30, 5.529–33, 5.593, 5.599–604, 5.723, 6.51–3, 6.107–10, 6.298–300, 6.306, 6.386, 6.407, 6.408–9, 6.422–3, 6.521, 6.578–82, 6.665–7, 6.685–8, 6.806–7, 6.854–7, 6.880–5, 7.223–6, 7.286–7, 7.393–7, 7.582–3, 7.625–7, 7.709–10, 7.744–9, 8.286–90, 8.358–62, 8.369–72, 8.407–11, 8.423–7, 8.460–5, 8.544–7, 8.616–20, 9.27–31, 9.242–7, 9.328–31, 9.401–3, 9.437–8, 9.438–9, 9.508–9, 9.533–6, 10.228–34, 10.373–5, 10.537–9, 10.674–5, 10.864–9, 11.27–31, 11.42–4, 11.114–18, 11.193–5, 11.274, 11.437–8, 11.483, 12.413–14, 12.515–18, 12.601–5, 12.650–5, 12.728–9.

Animals

Bulls

1.131–6, 2.323–30, 3.330–5, 4.69–73, 5.203–5, 5.330–4, 6.864–7, 7.436–40, 9.82–5, 9.115–19, 10.511–12, 11.27–31, 11.251–6, 12.601–5.

Lions and Tigers

2.128–32, 2.675–81, 4.315–6, 5.203–5, 5.330–4, 6.787–8, 7.529–32, 7.670–4, 8.124–6, 8.474–5, 8.572–6, 8.593–6, 9.189–95, 9.739–43, 10.288–92, 10.414–19, 10.820–6, 11.27–31, 11.741–7, 12.356–8, 12.739–40.

Other Animals

2.411–14, 2.469–75, 2.553–4, 2.559–60, 3.45–52, 4.95–100, 4.363–8, 4.494–9, 5.11–16, 5.165–9, 5.231–3, 5.349, 5.599–604, 6.186–92, 6.598–601, 6.868–9, 7.286–7, 7.393–7, 8.255–8, 8.532–5, 8.616–20, 8.674–6, 8.691–4, 8.749–50, 9.10–11, 9.27–31, 9.242–7, 9.360–2, 9.858–60, 10.42–8, 10.228–34, 10.458–62, 10.574–9, 10.601–3, 11.284–6, 11.310–14, 11.530–4, 12.15–21, 12.169–72, 12.478–80, 12.515–18.

Semi-human Figures and Monsters

1.485–7, 2.563–4, 2.595–601, 3.594–7, 3.604–5, 4.139–44, 5.261–4, 5.529–33, 6.716–18, 6.753–4, 7.638–9, 9.220–2, 10.849–52, 10.915–17, 11.7–8, 11.12–15.

Appendix C

This appendix lists the similes relevant to each of the principal themes of the *Thebaid* discussed in this chapter; these lists are indicative rather than definitive: see above, n. 26.

Abuse of Supernatural Power

1.92, 1.193-4, 1.370-5, 1.479-81, 1.535-6, 2.81-8, 2.105-7, 2.193-5, 2.236-43, 2.469-75, 2.595-601, 3.22-30, 3.56-7, 3.253-4, 3.255-9, 3.317-23, 3.432-9, 3.671-6, 4.24-31, 4.95-100, 4.494-9, 4.789-92, 4.801-3, 5.92-4, 5.144-6, 5.390-3, 5.529-33, 5.593, 5.704-9, 6.19-24, 6.186-92, 6.320-5, 6.386, 6.451-3, 6.753-4, 7.86-9, 7.139-44, 7.223-6, 7.477, 7.582-3, 7.625-7, 7.709-10, 7.744-9, 7.791-3, 7.804-7, 8.82-3, 8.124-6, 8.237-9, 8.267-70, 8.407-11, 8.423-7, 8.674-6, 9.141-3, 9.437-8, 9.438-9, 9.460-1, 9.523-5, 9.533-6, 10.13-14, 10.170-5, 10.182-6, 10.246-8, 10.373-5, 10.470, 10.646-9, 10.674-5, 10.849-52, 11.7-8, 11.12-15, 11.27-31, 11.114-18, 11.193-5, 11.218-19, 11.284-6, 11.318-20, 11.443-6, 11.461, 11.483, 11.520-3, 11.587-92, 12.12-13, 12.155-7, 12.224-7, 12.270-7, 12.413-14, 12.433-5, 12.515-18, 12.559, 12.601-5, 12.650-5, 12.733-5, 12.787-8, 12.791-3.

Abuse of Monarchal Power

1.131-6, 1.193-4, 1.370-5, 1.479-81, 2.105-7, 2.128-32, 2.193-5, 2.323-30, 2.411-14, 3.22-30, 3.45-52, 3.56-7, 3.330-5, 4.69-73, 4.363-8, 4.494-9, 5.704-9, 6.19-24, 6.451-3, 7.139-44, 7.393-7, 7.791-3, 7.804-7, 8.267-70, 8.286-93, 9.82-5, 9.141-3, 9.460-1, 9.523-5, 10.13-14, 10.182-6, 11.27-31, 11.114-18, 11.218-19, 11.251-6, 11.274, 11.284-6, 11.310-14, 11.443-6, 11.520-3, 12.12-13, 12.155-7, 12.515-18, 12.601-5, 12.650-5, 12.733-5, 12.787-8.

Consequences of the Abuse of Power

1.92, 1.193-4, 1.370-5, 2.105-7, 2.128-32, 2.193-5, 2.323-30, 3.45-52, 3.56-7, 3.317-23, 3.432-9, 3.432-9, 3.594-7, 4.24-31, 4.363-8, 4.494-9, 4.705-10, 5.203-5, 5.330-4, 5.349, 5.529-33, 5.599-604, 6.51-3, 6.107-110, 6.186-92, 6.483-4, 6.685-8, 6.880-85, 7.86-9, 7.139-44, 7.582-3, 7.625-7, 7.744-9, 7.791-3, 7.804-7, 8.369-72, 8.407-11, 8.423-7, 8.460-5, 9.141-3, 9.460-1, 9.408-9, 9.523-5, 10.13-14, 10.182-6, 10.288-92, 11.114-18, 11.284-6, 11.483, 11.520-3, 12.169-72, 12.478-80, 12.559.

The Constitutional Status of Euripidean and Statian Theseus: Some Aspects of the Criticism of Absolute Power in the *Thebaid*

Cecilia Criado

The Athenian intervention in the final book of Statius' *Thebaid* (12.464–808) has always divided classical scholars. “Optimistic” critics argue that Theseus is a *deus ex machina* whose presence interrupts the world of *nefas* and the fratricidal horror of the preceding books.¹ “Pessimistic” critics, on the other hand, see the warmongering attitude and the ambivalent presentation of the king of Athens as rendering him unsuited to the role of peacemaker. In their opinion, behind the figure of the Statian Theseus is a series of condemning allusions to the imperial system, and more specifically, to the emperor Domitian and his politics.² In a recent study, Bessone has tried to establish a middle ground between these two critical positions.³ There are four main points in her argument that I would like to consider. First, it is unlikely that Statius was hostile to the Flavian principate, and even less certain that the faction of the senatorial opposition had won his affection. On the contrary, he presents himself as a poet who is well integrated into the Roman imperial system and who, mirroring Vergil's didactic *persona*, claims an active role in the elaboration of Flavian ideology.⁴ Second, the “pessimistic” approach lays too great an emphasis on

1 Braund (1996a) 1, 16, 18, (2006) 271. See Lewis (1936) 55; Rieks (1967) 220–5; Vessey (1971a) 381–2, (1973) 63–4, 112–15, 305–16, (1989) 628; Burgess (1972) 348–9, (1978) 346–63; Helzlsouer (1996) 148–59; Ripoll (1998a) 177, 431–51, 495–502, 496; Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 294–6, 310–14, 369; Delarue (2000) 240–2, 244–5, 368–74, (2006) 119–20.

2 Burck (1953) 702; Schubert (1984) 257–8; Ahl (1986) 2845–98 (admitting, though, a rather positive view of Theseus in [1982] 935–7); Dominik (1990) 87–92, (1994b) 92–8, 156–8, pp. 277–283 in this volume; Davis (1994) 471; Hershkowitz (1994) 144–7, (1998) 296–301; McGuire (1997) 147–54, 239–43; Kirkpatrick (2000) 206–10; Ganiban (2007) 212–32; McNelis (2007) 2–8, 160–77; and, more cautiously, Pollmann (2004) 265. For more bibliography, see below, n. 49. Recent studies, however, have cast doubt on the traditional depictions of Domitian as a cruel despot by Pliny, Tacitus, and Suetonius: Newlands (2002) 8–10.

3 Bessone (2008).

4 Recourse to the recent re-elaborations of Elias' theories (1980) on the concept of the imperial is recommended by Rosati for the study of Flavian Rome. Rosati (2012) 266–7 concludes

the controversial and subversive “further voices” in the *Thebaid*, at the expense of the “official” epic voice. Third, these same scholars argue that Theseus’ erotic myths demonstrate a lack of ethics; this aspect of Theseus’ character, which was given a certain prominence by both Catullus and Ovid, is in fact downplayed by Statius. Finally, Bessone points out that there has been a tendency in modern criticism to subordinate the importance of Greek culture and literature—more specifically, the relevance of Euripides’ *Supplices*—to the creation of the poem.⁵ As a consequence of the growing awareness of these and other issues, recent scholarship has moved toward a rejection of both the “optimistic” and “pessimistic” approaches as one-dimensional, looking instead at the “disturbante ambiguità di Teseo.”⁶

When examining the presence of Theseus in the *Thebaid*, one must bear in mind two interrelated features that make Athenian mythology unique. In the first place, only two cycles (that of Cephalus and Procris, and that of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus) focus on the drama of domestic life, the predominant theme in Greek mythology as a whole. Secondly, Attic mythology is the result of Athens’ manipulation of its own pre-existing mythic material from the end of the sixth century BCE onwards. Both facts lead to the conclusion that it is thus a distinctively “political mythology.”⁷ Theseus provides the clearest example of the extent to which Athenian democracy usurped mythology for its own purposes.⁸ This *fabriqué*, mythic-historical king thus became the perfect vehicle for the presentation of the idealized vision of the city-state. It is certainly the case that such an idyllic self-representation on the part of Athens is reflected in some of the documents from that period, where the city is contrasted not only to barbarian peoples, but also to other Greek *poleis*. It is also clear that one conspicuous victim of this process of idealization of the Attic *polis* was Thebes, a staunch enemy of Athens during the Peloponnesian war in the fifth century and a rival in the struggle for hegemony during the fourth. According to the prevalent psychoanalytic and anthropological interpretations, Greek tragedy turned Thebes, the divided city, into the “mirror opposite of demo-

that “la corte va vista piuttosto como un corpo almeno parzialmente autonomo, capace di proporre una propria idea del potere e di negoziarla col vertice del potere stesso.”

5 As to these four questions, see Bessone (2008) 6, 14, 17, 13, respectively. On the influence of Aeschylus’ *Septem Contra Thebas* on the *Thebaid*, see Marinis, pp. 343–61 in this volume.

6 Bessone (2008) 4. See, e.g., Feeney (1991); Hardie (1993), (1997); Henderson (1993), (1998); Dietrich (1999); Lovatt (1999), (2005); Pagán (2000); Pollmann (2004); Ganiban (2007); McNelis (2007); Chaudhuri (2008).

7 Parker (1987) 187.

8 Carpenter (1997) 65; Hall (2007a) 342, (2007b) 226–30.

cratic Athens,”⁹ the city “One” and indivisible. Thebes’ fateful mythic history and recurring fratricidal wars would have allowed Attic tragedians to reinvent the place as an anti-Athens. Zeitlin argues that the Cadmean city functioned in the theater as “‘the other scene’ of the ‘other scene,’ that is the theater itself.”¹⁰ In sum: Zeitlin contends that Thebes worked as Athens’ unconscious on the dramatic stage.¹¹

Nowadays, the analysis of both literary *poleis* in terms of “One”-ness versus “Two”-ness enjoys widespread consensus and has been enthusiastically adopted in the study of Roman literature.¹² Nevertheless, this perspective—obviously indebted to the concept of binary opposition that psychoanalytic literary criticism inherited as a method from structural anthropology—remains open to discussion. Otherness in Attic tragedy (and in Greek thought) was not as monolithic as is generally thought. In the early 1990s, this approach was re-examined from within the core of Lacanianism itself. Loraux, for instance, after her break from the School of Paris and with her master J.P. Vernant,

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- 9 Zeitlin (1986) 116–23. The author develops ideas that she had already hinted at in Zeitlin (1982) 199 n. 5. This thesis had already been put forward by Devereux (1970) and Sabatucci (1978) 120. Similarly, Vidal-Naquet (1988) 118 had previously stated: “la *stasis* a un lieu privilégié qui est Thèbes, dont on pourrait dire qu’elle es une anti-cité”; in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Coloneus*, the Cadmean city “fonctionne comme paradigme de la cité divisée” (119) in contrast to Athens, the “cité modèle” (123). See also Segal (1981) 362 n. 1; Henderson (1993) 167–9.
 - 10 Zeitlin (1986) 116. In Lacan (1977) 193, the “other scene” is the scene of the dream and of the unconscious, or imaginary and symbolic theatre. Lacan translated thus Freud’s “der andere Schauplatz” (Freud [1900] 4, [1900–1901] 535–6) when referring to the locus of the unconscious which he used in his formulation of the “psychical locality.”
 - 11 In strictly psychoanalytic terms, the process of idealization constructed by Athens would have activated the expulsion or projection mechanism—“Ausstösung” in Freud (1925) 233–9. We could argue, following Žižek, that Thebes functioned as some sort of projected object of the ideology onto which Athens displaced and condensed that which it did not want to recognize in itself, so as to retain a perfect, coherent and likeable self-image. This ideal self-image is the collective correlate of what at the level of the subject normally goes by the name “ideal ego,” the total, complete version with which Athens would have identified as “one” social order. On the ideal ego, see Freud (1914); Lacan (1978) 256–7, (1988) 129–42; Žižek (2007) 79.
 - 12 Braund (2006a) 270 assumes Zeitlin’s methodological premises and concludes that in Roman literature the Cadmean city is no longer the mirror opposite of Rome, but rather its own specular image: “this [Statian] concern with Two emphasizes, not the ‘otherness’ associated with Thebes in Attic tragedy (on Zeitlin’s argument), but ‘same-ness,’ in fact of excess of ‘same-ness.’” See also Galinsky (1975) 221; Hardie (1990) 225 n. 12, 229; Henderson (1993) 167–9; Malamud (1995) 190; Dominik (1994b) 134, 174–5, (2003) 99–100; Janan (2004) 145; Papaioannou (2005) 27; McNelis (2007) 5.

proposed the abandonment of the ideal image of Athens as innocent, rational, and different not only from barbarian world, but also from other Greek cities (and also, I would add, from Rome). She argued against those notions that had so long been considered inherent to the “Greek miracle” by historical anthropology.¹³ Her principal concern was that the identity of Athens was to be conceived not in relation to difference from the other (for my purposes, both Thebes and Rome), but in relation to the proximity of two entities (“self” and “other”). Proximity versus difference: a reformulation of the concept of Athenian alterity that is not only engaging but, in my opinion, necessary.¹⁴ It places us, whether or not we sympathize with psychoanalysis, on firmer ground to recognize the weaknesses of Attic self-idealization¹⁵ and, subsequently, to evaluate the affinity of this unexpectedly divided Athens with a Rome that was recurrently plunged into civil wars.

Book Twelve of the *Thebaid* and Euripides’ *Supplices*

It is precisely Thebes that becomes the focus of Theseus’ most important acts as a statesman:¹⁶ the Athenian king’s reception of Oedipus, narrated by Sophocles in *Oedipus Coloneus*, and his aid in recovering the bodies of Polynices and the Argive dead, whose burials the Theban tyrant Creon had prohibited. This latter event, exhaustively documented in Athenian political literature during the fifth and fourth centuries, was the theme of both Aeschylus’ *Eleusinioi* and Euripides’ *Supplices*, although in two different versions of the story. Statius ignores the diplomatic arrangement reached by Aeschylus’ Theseus¹⁷ and, like

13 See in particular Vernant (1971), (1974) 31–56, (1996); Meier (1984); Hartog (1988); Hall (1989). For the opposite view see Loraux (1997) 95, 268, (2008) 29–49; Euben (2003) 8.

14 See Criado (2011) 3.

15 Explicit expression of such weaknesses is found in Aristotle. He agrees with the Platonic Socrates that the *μία*ν πᾶσιν (*Pol.* 1261a15–16) is convenient but, he warns, not absolutely *μία*. The polis is not by nature “one” (1261b6–7) because the word “all” is ambiguous, in that it means both “each severally” and “each collectively” (1261b26–32; see also 1261a18–21, 1261b30–2, 1277a5–12). For the problems of Athens with the numbers one and two, and for the need to incorporate number three in order to avoid, precisely, the dangers of *stasis*, see *Pol.* 1308b29–31 and Loraux (2008) 165.

16 Gantz (1993) 295.

17 Plutarch shows that in Aeschylus’ *Eleusinioi* Theseus convinced the Thebans to allow the burial of the Argives *πείσας καὶ σπεισάμενος* (“with persuasion and agreement,” *Thes.* 29.4.4). See also Isoc. *Panath.* 168.5–171.5.

Euripides, opts for armed intervention by the Athenian monarch.¹⁸ In doing so he effectively refuses to follow the distinctly Theban version, which was probably older than its Attic variants, and whose existence is confirmed by Pindar and Pausanias. According to this version, the Cadmean city was innocent of the crime of impiety ascribed to it in Athenian tragedy.¹⁹

Statius transforms the second half of the last book of the *Thebaid* into a veritable Roman *Supplices*. Many crucial details of this tragedy, though, are absent, and in contrast Statius introduces some significant innovations. Among these are the *ara Clementiae* ("altar of Mercy," *Theb.* 12.481–518) and the immediate assistance given to Argos by Athens (590–7), which leads to a brief, and just, yet destructive, war (709–81). Also mentioned is Theseus' return from his campaign against the Amazons (519–42), and—an element missing in Euripides' *Supplices*²⁰—Theseus' possession by *ira* ("anger"). *Iusta* ("just," 12.589, 714, 740), but plain *ira* anyway. Furthermore, Statius emphasizes the Thebans' lack of warlike heat as compared to the initial *ardor* of the Athenians (601–38, 692–714, 720–5).²¹ Finally, he makes Theseus the protagonist of an *aristeia*, of the single combat against the tyrant Creon (730–81), and of his tyrannicide. As we know, the presence of the altar of Mercy recreates and expands on the Attic tradition according to which the *bomos Eleou* ("altar of Pity") was placed in Athens. This symbolized Athenian humanity, justice, and *philoxenia*.²² Its effect upon Statius' narrative is certainly sweetening.²³ However, the other

18 See also Hdt. 9.27.14–7; Isoc. *Paneg.* 54.7–58.4, 64.4–6; Lys. 2.7–10.

19 Paus. 1.39.2, 9.25.2. This evidence may be considered too late but, around the time Aeschylus' *Eleusinioi* was written, the Theban Pindar affirmed that the bodies from Argos were incinerated in Thebes without any need for Athenian intervention (*Ol.* 6.15–7, *Nem.* 9.23–5). Pindar's version may have been a fair reply, addressed directly against the variant that Athens had set up as canonical. Notwithstanding, the schol. *ad* Pind. *Ol.* 6.15–7 (1 160 Drachmann) seems to suggest that this was how events had been recounted in the old *Cyclic Thebaid*. Moreover, the Homeric reference to Tydeus' body buried at Thebes (*Il.* 14.114) might itself have been borrowed from the Theban cycle: Torres Guerra (1993) 171–5, (1995) 39.

20 Finley (1938) 34; Pollmann (2004) 233.

21 In Euripides, on the contrary, the *agon* is *isorropos* (*Supp.* 706), that is, "balanced" (see also 684–6, 703–6). The tragedian recognizes on many occasions the warlike heroism of the Theban warriors, worthy descendants of the Spartoi (529, 703–4, 711–12, 928–9, 1167).

22 Rieks (1967) 222. For further bibliographical references, see Heslin (2008) 123 n. 22.

23 Scholars differ on this point. See Burgess (1972); Ahl (1986) 2898; Dominik (1994b) 3 n. 11, 54, 92–8, 125, 152–3; Hershkowitz (1994) 144–7; Braund (1996a) 9–18; Ripoll (1998a) 432–50; Dietrich (1999) 43–5; Lovatt (1999) 135–6; Delarue (2000) 109–11; Aricò (2002) 177–9; Ganiban (2007) 220–2; McNelis (2007) 172–3; Bessone (2008) 9–12, 29; Heslin (2008) 120–6; Coffee (2009a).

“additions” lend Theseus a heroic dimension²⁴ that Greek tragedy had by and large dismissed. In fact, in Euripides, Theseus—being the son of Aethra and Aegeus (*Supp.* 54–5, 642, 656)—is a mere human; this is also the case in the *Thebaid* (12.546, 769). The Flavian poet, though, does not want the king’s divine origin to be forgotten (*Neptunius*, 12.588, 665; *aequoreus*, 730). Therefore, once the fight has started, he is compared to Mars, who, driving his chariot from Haemus, brings about death and horror (734–5). Similarly, when the Athenian king orders the march against Thebes, he resembles Jupiter, provoking destructive meteorological battles (650–5); and, when he is about to fight Creon, the gestures and attitude that he adopts are fit for the father of gods and, consequently, he “thunders” (*intonat*, 771). However, this evident “re-heroization” of Theseus does not account for certain other divergences from the Greek prototype. The possibility of a diplomatic arrangement put forward by Euripides as an alternative to war (*Supp.* 346–7, 385–9, 669–73) and the delicacy with which the Athenian *anax* worded his appeal as a favor (ἀπαίτεῖ πρὸς χάριν, 385) both contrast with the demanding attitude of the Statian Theseus (*Theb.* 12.598) and that of Theseus’ herald, Phegeus.²⁵ The *Thebaid*’s Theseus also lacks the scruples that the Euripidean king showed in his external policies, as well as in his respect for civic religiosity (*Supp.* 155–61, 195–231, 561–3, 594–7, 608–17, 731–6). And, unlike in the *Supplices* (763–6), Statius’ Theseus does not bury the Argive warriors personally.

This authoritative, martial character has a drawback in that the Statian Theseus is represented as displaying the kind of warmongering attitude that so clearly annoys “pessimistic” critics. Yet it is perhaps a reluctance to accept the untidiness of reality (mainly as far as the reality of ancient Athens is concerned) and a tendency to “use our [rational] models to create evidence”²⁶ that has so strongly conditioned the interpretation of Theseus’ intervention in book 12 of the *Thebaid*. We scholars often forget the rather obvious fact that violence is inherent to the epic program from the beginning of the genre.²⁷ Similarly, we are often inclined to overlook the fact that political thought in democratic Athens and imperial Rome considered war a sad yet necessary consequence of

24 Hardie (1993) 48; Ripoll (1998a) 444; Bessone (2008) 17.

25 He is certainly a rather counter-productive ambassador: McGuire (1997) 177–8. Although he arrives in the Cadmean city holding olive branches, *bella ciet bellumque minatur* (“he stirs up war and war he threatens,” 12.683).

26 Murray (1990) 4. See Euben (2003) 6.

27 Moreover, as Lovatt (2001) 120 claims, the *Thebaid* opens up “at least a possibility that epic madness might be a positive quality.”

their respective imperialistic politics. In Statius' *Silvae*, Domitian is a pacifier, a peace-bringer (1.1.15–16, 37–8). Thanks to him *nefas* (including the *nefas* of civil war) is punished and *Pietas* returns to Earth (5.2.91–3). Thus, the emperor keeps his sword sheathed (1.1.43–54), although ready for use (79–81). Indeed, his portrait is not very different from that of Theseus in the *Thebaid*. In the latter, as also in Euripides' *Supplices*, the aim of Theseus is just, and his wrath at the impiety of the Thebans is *iusta* (*Theb.* 12.589). It will bring about pain for two peoples; nevertheless, it is necessary to secure the observance of the law, force Creon to abandon his uncivilized conduct (165–6, 590–1, 642–8), and re-establish peace (782–3). Therefore, the question is not that the characterization of Statius' Theseus is ambivalent, but rather that he faithfully reflects the Greek and Roman ideology of war; an ideology that suffers inevitable ambivalences, and according to which warlike conflict (fratricidal strife included) was a painful concomitant of political life. Pacifism was simply alien to the Athenian and Roman imperial mindset. Euripides and Statius understood this just as much as did Pericles.²⁸ Surprisingly, Lucan was also aware of this. Despite his intense emotional involvement (unprecedented in ancient epic) in the horrors of Roman civil warfare and his fierce denunciation of them, after the death of Pompey, which effectively dismissed any possibility of his becoming *dominus mundi* ("master of the world," 9.20), Lucan assumes Cato's striking change of opinion in 2.301–5. From book 9 onwards the Hispanic poet grows to be a straightforward supporter of civil war (9.23–30, 190–214, 256–83, 292–3, 385, 560–1). It would appear, then, that Lucan finally came to recognize that war, even civil war, may be perceived as "an intrinsic part of the order."²⁹

28 Pericles makes this clear before the Athenian Assembly (Thuc. 1.140–1, 2.60–4), and hence the question of whether or not Thucydides condemned the imperialism of the first Athenian citizen becomes a secondary issue: Gomme (1945–1981); De Romilly (1963); for a recent discussion of this, see Riley (2000) 119 n. 6. In Euripides, the arguments against war put forward by Theseus and Adrastus (*Supp.* 229–37, 949–52) are refuted with good sense by Aethra (324–5) and by Athena herself (1214–26). Besides, the words of the Theban herald make it clear that Athens is prone to involving itself in foreign policies (472, 492–3, 576). The tragedian does not try to hide the warmongering character of Athens and of Greece as a whole (485, 488, 491–2, 574, 748–9). In relation to this latter aspect, what in fact can be said about the disturbing passage of Plato's *Leges* (869c6–69d2) in which he legitimates fratricide in the case of *stasis*?

29 Howard (2000) 2; Tritle (2007) 172.

The Constitutional Status of Theseus in Euripides and Statius

In Euripides' *Supplices* the Theban herald arrives in Athens and asks to be taken before the *tyrannos* (399). Theseus replies that there is no point in the ambassador seeking such a political figure in Athens, since it is a free city; it is the people who rule here (*anasse*, 403–8). Then, for the first and only time in the Euripidean plays, the herald and Theseus enter into a dialectical *agon* on the best form of government for a city.³⁰ The Theban mocks the Athenian *ochlokratia* (*Supp.* 411; see Plb. 6.57.9). When Theseus finally speaks, he states that Athens' political system is the people's *monarchia* (352). Curiously enough, this idyllic *monarchia demou* is the kind of democracy Aristotle will revile (*Pol.* 1292a11–37). Theseus then speaks against the figure of the *tyrannos* by pronouncing a veritable *uituperatio regis* (429–55) that, as we shall see, recalls those in the Statian narrative. However, in contrast to Euripides, Statius does not make explicit reference to the political regime of Athens, alluding to it only obliquely. *Proceres*, as uttered by a very prudent Argia³¹ (*Theb.* 12.211), provides the only clue to Athens' *politeia*. Thus, we can infer that the wife of Polynices believes an assembly in the city is limiting Theseus' capacity to act. Still, both in fifth-century BCE Greece and in Flavian Rome, this word hardly denotes anything more than an unspecified parliamentary regime. Hence, it could refer to the *basilike* monarchy of heroic times that, according to Aristotle, ruled over willing subjects and whose kings accede to the throne with the consent of the people (*Pol.* 1285b4–9). It could also denote the existence of an aristocratic oligarchy, of a collegiate kingship patterned after the Spartan monarchy (*Pol.* 1285a4–16) or even of a senatorial republic in the Roman style. Nevertheless, none of these political systems seem to prevail in Statian Athens.

Unlike in Euripides' *Supplices*, Theseus orders the herald Phegeus to inform Creon of his authoritative decree (*aut Danaïs edice rogos aut proelia Thebis*, “ordain burial for the Danaans or battle for Thebes,” *Theb.* 12.598). Surely enough, Theseus is “perfectly happy to make a decision quickly and after ‘consulting’ himself only.”³² After this he does not need to summon an assembly or ask its approval, and performs naturally as an absolute monarch. This form of behavior, as well as the presence of *Clementia* (which Roman political thought had associated—back in the republic—with the power of a single person, and

30 See also, e.g., the contests between Teucer and Menelaus in Soph. *Aj.* 1052–90, Creon and Haemon in *Ant.* 639–765 (particularly 734–45), and Theseus and Creon in *OC* 912–23, 1032–3.

31 On Argia's role in the last book of the *Thebaid*, see recent contributions by Hershkovitz (1994) 143; Lovatt (1999) 136–40; Heslin (2008) 114–20.

32 Pollmann (2004) 139–40.

later on with that of the emperor)³³ brings Statian Athens close to the imperial system of Domitian's Rome. Furthermore, it could be argued that it is quite an exact correlate, given that these Athenian *proceres* are as ornamental as the "atrophied senatorial class"³⁴ governing alongside the Roman emperors during the first century CE. The fact that imperial Rome finds its political reflection in Statian Athens, though, does not imply that Athens lacks features of Thebes. As I have already suggested, neither in the case of Attic tragedy nor in the *Thebaid* is it possible (or rather, convenient to make it possible) to set up the identities of mythic-historical Athens and mythic Thebes in terms of sheer, systematic contrast, as has been seen in structural anthropology and psychoanalysis throughout the greater part of the twentieth century. Indeed, Statian Thebes happens to share the governmental system of Athens and, consequently, of Rome. Eteocles makes this perfectly clear in his reply to Tydeus, who arrives in Thebes to demand that Polynices be given his turn to rule. The Cadmean king claims that neither the Theban people nor the *patres* (*Theb.* 2.443, 450) need to put up with constantly changing *imperia* and *tyranni* (443–6). He also states that they would not let the throne pass to his brother (450–1). Hence, in Thebes there are *proceres* (3.92) and an assembly (93). But just as in Rome and in Statian Athens, the Cadmean *patres* must abide by the desires of their sovereign with a submissive *adsensu* (11.755–6).

Thus, although Theseus in the *Thebaid* could be accused of many ambiguities, constitutional ambiguity is not one of them. In Euripides, on the contrary, Theseus' political status is uncertain, while Creon's condition as tyrant is perfectly clear. Adrastus and the chorus call Theseus *anax* on several occasions (*Supp.* 113, 164, 255, 625). The Athenian—despite his pretension of having devolved sovereignty on the people of Athens—does not complain. This is of no surprise, given that in tragic diction *anax* can be understood as "king" or simply "lord." Nevertheless, in *Supplices* the Athenian political system oscillates disturbingly between monarchy and proto-democracy (just as in Aeschylus' *Supplices*, Euripides' *Heraclidae*, and Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*).³⁵ Theseus

33 See Burgess (1972); Braund (1996a); Griffin (2003a).

34 Zissos (2005) 512. See Luc. 9.206–7.

35 Ambiguity—between *pambasileia* ("absolute monarchy," Arist. *Pol.* 1287a8.9) and that other monarchy that οὐκ ἔστι δὲ κυρία πάντων ("is not sovereign at all levels," *Pol.* 1285a4–5)—is also present in the case of Argos. It is certainly a monarchy, for Adrastus is an *anax* (*Supp.* 13, 105) and he calls himself *tyrannos* (166), a word which had become a common synonym for *anax* in tragedy. It is in this condition of absolute king that Athena recognizes Adrastus in her final intervention. The goddess affirms that, being the *tyrannos* of the Argives, he has the power to act on behalf of his people (1189–90). Yet, at the beginning of *Supplices*, Theseus had asked the Argive king whether he had made the decision to request Athens' help on his own, or whether the whole city had participated in the

initially refuses to help Adrastus, arguing that he would have to give his citizens a sensible argument to justify his action (*Supp.* 247). When he does concede, he makes clear that it was he who endowed the Athenian people with power and that, consequently, he must now consult them (349–53, 403–8). Unlike in Statius, then, he summons the assembly (356), which accepts his suggestion (393–4). Theseus, though, is aware of the power of his word, and understands perfectly well that he has the power to manipulate his people. His democratic intentions remain an empty gesture whose effectiveness he sets out explicitly: δόξει δ' ἐμοῦ θέλοντος: ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου / προσδοῦς ἔχοιμ' ἂν δῆμον εὐμενέστερον (“if I want it, they will accept it; still, by communicating the proposal to them I would find the people better disposed,” 350–1). It is rather tempting to compare these words to those used by Thucydides years later to describe Pericles’ implementation of democracy (2.65.8.3–9.3), especially Thucydides’ claim that the Athens of Pericles ἐγίγνετο τε λόγῳ μὲν δημοκρατία, ἔργῳ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρὸς ἀρχή (“though still in name a democracy, was in fact the rule of its greatest citizen,” 2.65.9.3–10.1).³⁶ Certainly, the constitutional powers of Pericles were not absolute in any way and “he could only continue to keep his position through his direct influence with the *ekkleisia*.”³⁷ Even so, and although Mills qualifies the specific comparison of Pericles with Theseus as illusory,³⁸ the description of democracy provided in Thucydides 2.37.1 presents a rather paradoxical and Euripidean mixture of democratic and aristocratic elements.³⁹

Statian Criticism of Tyranny and the System of Alternating Monarchy

The contest between the Theban herald and Theseus in *Supplices* is in keeping with the constitutional debate of contemporary Athens as it is presented

decision (129). Adrastus’ answer is firm: *pantes* (130). That is to say, Adrastus’ words look towards Argos in historical times and its attempt at some sort of collegiate government involving an assembly. There are, however, no doubts about the Theban Creon. Theseus calls him *tyrannos* (384), alluding directly to the tyrannical system.

36 Consider the similarity between Thucydides’ and Herodotus’ thought (Hdt. 3.82.20). See also Solon frag. 9 West (quoted by Hornblower [1991] 1.346). The resemblance between Athens under Theseus and Athens under Pericles has been noted by many modern critics. For a bibliography, see Mills (1997) 103 n. 58.

37 Gomme (1945–1981) 194.

38 Mills (1997) 103.

39 Edmunds and Martin (1977) 191. Heslin (2008) 128 holds the opposite view.

by Herodotus, Thucydides, and the so-called Old Oligarch.⁴⁰ It seems logical to suppose that Flavian Rome was not the right stage for a political debate about the pros and cons of the different government systems. However, Nero's Rome had not been so either, and this did not dissuade Lucan from presenting the dialectic between Republic and *regnum*.⁴¹ Statius does not seek to avoid the issue of fratricidal war, already considered dangerous during the Augustan *pax*.⁴² However, unlike Lucan, he seems to have dodged the slippery ground of the various forms of government. In fact the *Thebaid* does not suggest—not even once—the possibility of an alternative to the *imperium*.⁴³ Following Seneca, Statius presents the imperial system as an unquestionable reality, and it is impossible to discern whether in doing so he is impelled by honesty or by caution. He simply reflects upon two political figures that might appear in that system: the good monarch and the tyrant. The difference between them, as in Seneca, lies in the use of unjustified cruelty by the tyrant (*Sen. Clem.* 1.11.4). And also as with Seneca (*Clem.* 1.1.3, 11.4, 26.1, *Ep.* 114.24), in Statius both terms designate a type of man and not a political regime. Thus, there is nothing in the *Thebaid* to suggest the poet does not admit that “un bon tyran est préférable à un mauvais roi”; for a good tyrant “est en fait un bon roi,”⁴⁴ or, at least, an acceptably good king, as is the case with Adrastus, Oedipus, and Theseus in the poem.

As already noted, Statius introduces several *uituperationes regis*. With the exception of Oedipus' condemnation of Creon's cruelty (*inclementia*) in 11.677–707, he moves them from the end of the poem, where they should have been according to Euripides' *Supplices*, to the beginning of the narrative. Anonymous citizens (1.173–96), Tydeus (2.415–51), Maeon, (3.71–7), and Aletes (3.206–13) criticize the tyrannical rule of Eteocles. From Hesiod onwards, both in Greece and in Rome, there had been a long-lasting rhetorical tradition of rebellion against tyranny (including Euripides' *Supplices*). Statius is at all times faithful to the *topoi* that characterize this rhetorical type of speech.⁴⁵ Obviously, these passages are indebted to criticisms of *regnum* expressed by

40 See, among others passages, Hdt. 3.80–2; Thuc. 2.65.8–11, 6.89.4–5; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.5–9; Ar. *Eq.*, *Vesp.*

41 MacMullen (1966) 25–6.

42 Let us remember, for instance, Horace's warnings to Pollio in relation to the risks of writing about civil wars (*Carm.* 2.1.5–8) and Tacitus' reflections on the *Thyestes* of Curvatus Maternus (*Dial.* 3.2–3).

43 Chaudhuri (2008) 156.

44 Faider *et al.* (1950) 85.

45 Dominik (1994c) 154–62.

Lucan through a series of anonymous characters (2.38–42, 45–63, 68–232). Prior to Lucan, the epic genre had already institutionalized two prototypes of dissension against kings: the Homeric Thersites (*Il.* 2.225–45) and the Vergilian Drances (*Aen.* 11.343–75). These are also echoed in Statius' work.⁴⁶ In the *Thebaid*, the argument of the first critic, the anonymous Theban speaker, pertains to the inadequacy of the political scheme that involves the alternating kingship established by Eteocles and Polynices (1.173–8, 193–6) through a *foedus* (141). His remarks accurately reproduce the editorial comments introduced by the poet in the immediately preceding verses (138–41, 152–5).⁴⁷ In these, Statius qualified such a regal bargain as *ius malignum* ("an ill-spirited law," 139). Consequently, both for the Theban citizen and for Statius himself, the system of government based on the constant change of rulers is pernicious.

In describing an initially peaceful agreement between Eteocles and Polynices to alternate kingship, as well as its subsequent rupture, Seneca's *Phoenissae* and Statius' *Thebaid* follow Euripides. The Greek tragedian is the first author in which the pact between brothers consists specifically of the assignment of periods of rule.⁴⁸ Yet Euripides, unlike the Flavian poet, does not question the legitimacy of this pact. Statius' deviation here may be seen as evidence for "pessimistic" scholars. The passage could have acted as a link between the Theban royal house and the recent history of imperial Rome. As such, it would be a critical allusion to the situation of political chaos affecting Rome between 68–69 CE due to the brief, violent regimes of Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian; it might even be understood as a reference to the bad relations between Titus and Domitian, and to the alleged conspiracy of the latter to overthrow his brother.⁴⁹ However, years before the civil wars that

46 Legras (1905a) 33 n. 4; Juhnke (1972) 53–4; Vessey (1973) 79 n. 1; Ahl (1986) 2829 n. 29; Smolenaars (1994) 212; Ripoll (2000) 45–57.

47 Ahl (1986) 2828; Dominik (1990) 74, (1994b) 16.

48 Clearly in *Phoen.* 69–74 and more obscurely in *Supp.* 13–16 (see also Aesch. *Sept.* 934, *Soph. OC* 1354). This version would become canonical later on (Diod. Sic. 4.65.1, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.1, Hyg. *Fab.* 67.8). According to other sources, one of the brothers gets the throne and the other inherits the family's wealth (Stesichorus, *PLille* 76aⁱⁱ+73i, 73ii +76ci; Hellanicus, *FGrH* 4 frag. 98). In Pherecydes, this bargain seems not to have existed, and Polynices was in fact expelled by his elder brother Eteocles (*FGrH* 3 frag. 96; *Soph. OC* 1292, 1329).

49 Hartman (1916) 356–7; Gossage (1972) 206; Aden (1973) 728–39; Ahl (1984a) 205–6, (1984b) 85–91, (1986) 2828–30; Schubert (1984) 103; Caiani (1989) 235–40; Dominik (1990) 84–6, 92–3, (1994b) 138–9, 148–53, 178–9; Davis (1994) 481–3. See also Henderson (1998b) 220. Against the possible presence in the *Thebaid* of negative side-allusions to the rule of the Flavians, see above, n. 1 and Gsell (1893) 37; Scott (1933); Schetter (1960) 125–7; Bardon (1968) 311–12; Brugnoli (1965) 15, 25; Venini (1965b) 162; Snijder (1968) 21; Dams (1970)

followed Nero's death, and before Statius described the *foedus* established by the Theban brothers as *ius malignum*, Lucan had already defined the *foedera regni* that brought about the formation of the triumvirate of Pompeius, Crassus, and Caesar in 60 BCE as *feralia* ("ill-fated," 1.86). This, plus the strong reminiscence of Lucan's *rupto foedere* (Luc. 1.4) in the initial verses of the *Thebaid* (*fraternas acies alternaque regna profanis / decertata odiis*, "fraternal warfare and alternate reigns fought for in sacrilegious hate," *Theb.* 1.1–2),⁵⁰ seems to indicate that Statius follows the ideological approach of Lucan quite faithfully. However, the Statian view differs from that of the Hispanic poet more than is usually recognized. Despite appearances, Lucan's primary aim is not to censure the rupture of the *foedera* (which, as we shall see, is indeed a priority for Statius) but to deny their very existence. For this reason he blames the Romans for having endorsed them and for having agreed to become the communal property of three masters (1.85). In contrast to the systematic acquiescence Lucan shows when he listens to people's criticisms of unipersonal authority, and also in contrast to Homer's (*Il.* 2.212–21) and Vergil's condemnation of such criticism (*Aen.* 11.336–42), Statius' opinion of the people's rebelliousness and of alternating rule fluctuates. His position is not so much ambiguous as inextricable.

Certainly, as Ahl has hinted,⁵¹ if Statius and the anonymous Theban of book 1 share the same negative opinion of the rotating rule, why does the poet criticize so harshly (in an Homeric and Vergilian way) the verbal defiance of this citizen against his sovereign (1.171–3)? Later on we see that he adopts Lucan's model, showing respect for the verbal *libertas* of the priest Maeon (3.99–114) and applauding the old Aletes' courage against the tyrant Eteocles (3.216–7). Both the *uates* and the old man demand that the Theban king observe the *foedus regni* (3.72, 208). Why, then, does Statius praise them, given that, had their claims been considered, the very alternating kingship which the poet had vituperated in 1.138–41 and 152–5 would have been implemented? The inconvenience of a political regime hinged on a principle of annuity is brought up again in book 2. But at this point it is Eteocles, unexpectedly, who resorts to the political arguments approved by Statius in book 1 (2.442–7; see also 11.391). Oedipus' son replies to Tydeus, who had traveled to Thebes in order to

130; Caviglia (1973b) 138; Frassinetti (1973) 253; Jones (1973) 79–91, (1974) 529–35; Thraede (1973); Ogilvie (1980) 234; Coleman (1986); Franchet d'Espèrey (1986); Nagel (1999).

50 There is a sort of premonition of Lucan's proem in Sen. *Dial.* 4.9.3–4 (see also Sen. *Thy.* 47–8, *Phoen.* 280). When the philosopher identifies Roman civil strife with fratricidal wars, he uses the phrase *rupta foedera* (*Dial.* 4.9.4.2).

51 Ahl (1986) 2829.

demand that the king stand by the agreement he had made with his brother Polynices. This passage is doubly striking. Firstly, because Eteocles—together with Creon—represents the figure of the tyrant throughout the entire narrative, which implies that sound political judgment should not be expected of him. Secondly, because Statius, in a new authorial interjection, affirms that, although Tydeus' words are coarse, his demands are just (2.391–2). It appears that the poet now believes that it is just that the pact be honored and that Polynices be allowed to rule.

Thus, after book 1 Statius does not return to the issue of alternating rule as something problematical, and the truth is that throughout the rest of the poem he remains faithful to this approach. In accepting the justice of Polynices' claim, the poet follows scrupulously the version of Euripides' *Supplices* and *Phoenissae*, and of Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*.⁵² These tragedies (maybe as a consequence of the political rapprochement between Athens and Argos after 424 BCE) presented an evolved version of the myth,⁵³ since they chose sides for Argos, and thus for the exiled brother. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of Polynices' rights was in perfect accord with the legal ideology of Rome. Eteocles' perjury would not have been penalized by Roman law. Nevertheless, in Rome the unilateral breach of an agreement or of an oath had greater consequences than in the case of violating civil laws. In accordance with the religion that Numa had established, promises by oath did not belong to the realm of *ius humanum* but to *diuinum* (Liv. 1.18.1, 21.1). *Fides* was closely associated with Jupiter, the god of oaths (Enn. *Scen.* 350; Cic. *Off.* 3.104.10–13); transgression against an oath, then, was an offence against a deity. Consequently, as in the Theban tragedies of Seneca,⁵⁴ the violation of the *iura* by Eteocles in the *Thebaid* is ethically and politically reprehensible (e.g., 1.128; 2.386–8; 3.233, 341–2, 389–90; 6.290–1, 654–5). Just like Euripides (*Supp.* 231–7) and Seneca (*Phoen.* 296–7, 275–6, 378–9, 555–82), Statius disapproves of Polynices' armed reaction and his thirst for power (1.314–23, 2.116, 7.558–9, 11.363–82). Jupiter himself condemns the fratricidal duel of the Theban brothers as immoral (11.125–6). He does, though, proclaim the epic legitimacy of the war started by the younger brother (*uidimus armiferos quod fas erat usque, furores, / caelicolae, licitasque acies*, "Sky-Dwellers, we have seen martial fury carried to the limits of what is lawful, but even so, legal battles," 11.122–3). Moreover, the poet states

52 Cf. Marinis, pp. 353–8 in this volume.

53 De Filippis (1901) 126; Welcker (1849) 341.

54 Violating a government agreement is clearly *nefas* (Sen. *Thy.* 25–6, 47–8, 1024; *Phoen.* 280, 649–50), and, more specifically, Polynices' claim is a just one (*Phoen.* 282–3, 324, 384–5, 462–3, 513).

that those worthy of seeking asylum at the altar of Mercy are, among others, the *regnorumque inopes* ("those who lost their throne," 12.508), the very condition in which Polynices finds himself. Throughout the narrative, it is he who deserves to triumph (1.189–90; 2.374; 3.389–90; 4.79–83; 8.615, 687; 10.583–8; 11.380–1) and his fratricidal deed is seen as less unjust than that committed by his brother (11.541–2). In the end it appears that the tension established in book 1 between Roman contemporary history on the one hand—censorship/approval of the alternate rules—and Attic myth and imperial Roman thought on the other—apology for the fairness of Polynices' claim and justification of the war—is resolved in favor of these latter.

Conclusion

The *Thebaid* and the *Silvae*, as with the Greek tragedies about Thebes, offered no room for political dissent. Nevertheless, there is definitely room for reflection, hopeless though it may be.⁵⁵ Like Theseus (*Supp.* 1169, 1173) and Athena (1204) at the end of Euripides' *Supplices*, Statius emphasizes the importance of *memoria* in order to stave off a war which will inevitably result from the thirst for power. He addresses the admonitory message of his epic to the kings (*et soli memorent haec proelia reges*, "let only the kings recall this battle," 11.579). Yet, the poet himself acknowledges the futility of such a Lucretian aim.⁵⁶ He is perfectly aware that those *reges* are not the kind of pupils demanded by a *protreptikos logos*; they do not embody the status of ideal recipients of a didactic message (*numquamne priorum / haerebunt documenta nouis [regibus]?*, "will new kings never keep in mind the examples of their predecessors?", *Theb.* 11.656–7). Unfortunately, monarchs "are not a receptive audience."⁵⁷

One final point of relevance to the above discussion is that Statius in fact turns out to deviate noticeably from Roman discourse on civil war. From Greek tragedy onwards, the civil implications of the fratricidal war between Eteocles and Polynices had been strongly emphasized.⁵⁸ Statius is aware of the difference, already well established in archaic Greece, between civil war and external strife (*Theb.* 7.381–6, 9.97–8, 12.720). He also knows that the Theban struggle exceeds merely intrafamilial levels, attaining the dimensions of genuine civil

55 For the absence of political subversion also in the *Silvae*, see Newlands (2002) 25, 46–87.

56 Cf. Malamud (1995) 197–8.

57 Markus (2004) 123.

58 Aesch. *Sept.* 580–3, 668–9, 679–82; Soph. *Ant.* 199–202, 517–8, OC 1234, 1420–1; Eur. *Phoen.* 510–12, 570, 603.

war (11.57–9, 97–9, 123–6, 430–1). After Ovid, the fratricidal conflict between Eteocles and Polynices (as well as those among the Cadmean *terrigenae* and among their successors, the Colchian Spartoi) was depicted by the chroniclers of civil *nefas* with explicitly Roman echoes. Thebes had become the prototype of Roman civil wars and first-century CE authors had repeatedly characterized Theban fratricides as *ciuiles*.⁵⁹ Therefore, it is by no means irrelevant to question why Statius refused to subscribe to this reading and avoided referring to this fratricidal struggle as “civil” war.⁶⁰ It would seem that the Flavian poet preferred to eschew the very Lacanian, conflictual nature of the dual relationship of both mythic Thebes and contemporary Rome.⁶¹

59 Ov. *Met.* 3.117, 7.140–2, *Her.* 6.35; Sen. *Phoen.* 354–5, 491–2, 540–2, *Oed.* 738, 748; Luc. 1.549–52, 4.549–51, 6.395; V. Fl. 5.221; Sil. 16.546–8. See Río Torres-Murciano (2006) 203–14; Bartolomé (2009) 37, 39; Criado (forthcoming).

60 There is just one exception that does not contradict my argument here. During the celebration of the funeral games in Nemea, Capaneus calls for a Theban contender so as not to shed *ciuilis sanguis* if he kills a citizen of Argive (*Theb.* 6.737).

61 I would like to thank professors A. Río Torres-Murciano and J. Sacido for their enlightening comments.

Dead Woman Walking: Jocasta in the *Thebaid*

Jessica S. Dietrich

Jocasta, wife of Laius, wife and mother of Oedipus, mother of Eteocles and Polynices as well as Antigone and Ismene, and finally, sister of Creon, perhaps best embodies the confusion associated with the house of Oedipus. In his presentation of the two major episodes involving Jocasta in the *Thebaid*—her attempts to persuade her sons against fighting each other and her suicide—Statius engages with literary models, including epic and tragedy as well as historical accounts, and carefully combines his sources, developing a complex series of allusions.¹ It is not surprising that Statius evokes many models in his portrayal of Jocasta in the *Thebaid*, but through such allusions, Statius invites comparisons that highlight important differences, distinguishing his Jocasta as a uniquely Flavian creation. Statius consistently plays with the contradictory traditions surrounding Jocasta's death in particular, thus creating a figure who can be read as among the living but also one of the dead. In this way, Jocasta's role may be similar to that of her first husband Laius, who is twice brought back from the dead to influence the world of the living.

Ecce Jocasta: Jocasta in Thebaid 7

In *Thebaid* 7, Jocasta bursts onto the scene: *ecce truces oculos sordentibus obsita canis / exangues Iocasta genas et bracchia planctu* ("Look! Jocasta, her savage eyes and bloodless cheeks covered by her filthy gray hair and her arms covered with beating," *Theb.* 7.474–5). Jocasta's intrusion into the text in *Thebaid* 7 may have been a surprise to Statius' readers who would have good reason to assume that Jocasta had died after Oedipus blinded himself, as she does in Sophocles' and Seneca's *Oedipus*. Indeed, in *Thebaid* 1, Oedipus remarks that he has left his eyes on his mother (*miseraque oculos in matre reliqui*, 1.72), which is a clear reference to Sophocles' *Oedipus*, thus implying that Jocasta is already dead.² Smolenaars rightly tries to make sense of this apparent contradiction of a reference to Jocasta's death in book 1 and her appearance, apparently alive,

¹ Smolenaars (2008) 220–3 investigates the wider tradition of Jocasta's role in Theban legend.

² Smolenaars (2008) 219.

in book 7. But while Smolenaars suggests that it is not necessary to read the reference in book 1 as being to Jocasta's corpse,³ I would argue that the ambiguity of Jocasta's status as living or dead is maintained and exploited by Statius in his introduction of her into his story,⁴ as well as in her other appearances in the epic.

Statius' emphasis on Jocasta's physical appearance, in particular her filthy hair and bruised arms, may evoke depictions of female lamentation, an association Statius returns to in Jocasta's embassy to Polynices,⁵ but there is also a suggestion of another kind of imagery—that of a fury. In his commentary on *Thebaid* 7, Smolenaars argues that the description of Jocasta's appearance is primarily derived from Vergil's Allecto in *Aeneid* 7, who appears to Turnus as the aged Calybe.⁶ This connection to Allecto is strengthened by the simile following Jocasta's appearance in which Statius explicitly compares Jocasta to a fury: *Eumenidum uelut antiquissima* ("like the oldest of the Eumenides," *Theb.* 7.477). It is difficult, however, to view Jocasta as acting as a fury in this passage as she strives to stop rather than stir up the war between her sons.⁷ Statius perhaps contrasts Jocasta's fury-like appearance at the beginning of the passage with the action of the real Fury who instigates the war that Jocasta has failed to avert at the conclusion of her intervention: *arma iterum furiaeque placent; fera tempus Erinys / arripit* ("arms and battle lust are pleasing again; the savage Fury jumps at the opportunity," 7.562–3). Therefore, Jocasta is characterized by fury imagery, but her role within the episode is seemingly quite different from that of the actual Furies.⁸ These two aspects of Statius' description of Jocasta, her physical appearance and the use of fury imagery, may allow the poet to exploit otherworldly figures similar to the furies, yet not quite the same—figures such as dreams, visions and ghosts.

Thus, although Jocasta is introduced on a peace-keeping mission, the simile comparing her to a fury has sinister implications that are evoked by a further

3 Smolenaars (2008) 235.

4 That figures in the *Thebaid* act like the living dead is argued by Hardie (1993) 44–6, who views Eteocles and Polynices as furies who act after death, and Vessey (1973) 280, who refers to Oedipus' living death.

5 Cf. below, p. 312 n. 25 for lamentation in the characterization of Jocasta in *Thebaid* 7 as well as in her embassy to Eteocles in book 11.

6 Smolenaars (1994) 220–2; Ganiban (2007) 112.

7 For readings of Jocasta's role in the violent action of the poem, see Ganiban (2007) 112; Keith (2000) 97; and especially Augoustakis (2010b) 62–4 on the tension between the representation of a fury and an emphasis on her maternal role.

8 Hershkowitz (1998) 280 suggests that Jocasta's passivity and resignation make her an unwitting agent of the Furies, but it may also be evidence of her status as not quite alive.

set of allusions. Like Jocasta in the *Thebaid*, the *imago* of the *patria* that appears to Caesar in Lucan's *De Bello Civili* 1 displays signs of mourning including rent hair and bare breast (1.187–9). Both Statius and Lucan may be drawing on the appearance to Aeneas of Hector's ghost in *Aeneid* 2 which is characterized by wounds and squalor (2.277–8). Vergil's Hector and Lucan's *imago patriae* advocate avoiding battle and thus suggest a role for Statius' Jocasta in *Thebaid* 7. The comparison of Jocasta to a fury, I would argue, may also evoke Pompey's dream of his dead wife, Julia, whom Lucan describes as *furialis* at *De Bello Civili* 3.11. Furthermore, Julia describes what she has seen in the underworld including the Furies (*uidi . . . / Eumenidas*, 3.14–15). By using *Eumenidum* in his simile for Jocasta, Statius may allude to Lucan's account of Julia's ghost. If so, this is an important intertext, because the effect of Julia's appearance on Pompey not only enflames him for battle (*maior in arma ruit certa cum mente malorum*, "greater he rushed into arms with a mind resolved on evils," 37),⁹ foreshadowing the failure of Jocasta, but also leads Pompey to ponder the nature of death: *aut nihil est sensus animis a morte relictum / aut mors ipsa nihil* ("either no feeling is left behind from death for the soul or death itself is nothing," 39–40). In the *Thebaid* Jocasta, as both living and dead, comes to embody Pompey's *sententia* that death is inconsequential.

Statius' possible echo of Lucan may also point to a kind of appearance of the dead that is different from dreams, ghosts, and visions: necromancy. Statius' choice of *Eumenidum antiquissima* in the simile used to characterize Jocasta evokes *Aeneid* 6.250 (*matri Eumenidum*, "the mother of the Eumenides")¹⁰ in Vergil's account of Aeneas' calling upon the dead. In performing the ritual, Aeneas sacrifices a black lamb which may be recalled by the fillets of black wool associated with Jocasta's appearance.¹¹ Furthermore, Jocasta bears these fillets on an olive branch (*ramus*), a further allusion to *Aeneid* 6 and the golden bough (*aureus . . . ramus*, 6.137) seized by Aeneas in order to enter the underworld. Statius' references to Aeneas' encounter with the dead through the appearance of Jocasta in *Thebaid* 7 associate her with necromancy.

Indeed, Statius makes an explicit connection between Jocasta's appearance in *Thebaid* 7 and that of her dead husband earlier in the epic. In *Thebaid* 2, Mercury delivers the ghost of Laius to accost Eteocles. In order not to seem like an empty vision (2.94–5), Laius takes on the face and voice of Tiresias, although he keeps his own hair: *mansere comae propexaque mento / canities*

9 See Morford (1967) 79–81 on Pompey's dream. Vessey (1973) 235 connects Pompey's dream to Laius' ghost in *Thebaid* 2.

10 Smolenaars (1994) 223.

11 Cf. *Aen.* 6.249 (*atri uelleris agnam*) and *Theb.* 7.476–7 (*cum uelleris atri / nexibus*).

pallorque suus ("his hair and the grey hairs combed forward from his chin and his own pallor remained," 97–8). Laius' long hair, beard and pallor may be evoked by Jocasta's dirty hair (*sordentibus . . . canis*, 7.474) and bloodless cheeks (*exsanges . . . genas*, 475), but it is the fillets and olive branch that Laius as Tiresias wears that strengthen this connection. The fillets, described as woven with olive (*glaucaeque innexus oliuae*, 2.99), and the branch he carries (*ramo*, 100) are echoed by the olive branch tied with black wool (*ramumque oleae cum uelleris atri / nexibus*, 7.476–7) carried by Jocasta. Statius, then, creates a neat little parallel between *Thebaid* 2 where Laius' shade approaches Eteocles and *Thebaid* 7 where what appears to be the shade of Jocasta approaches Polynices, a connection, I will argue, the poet exploits at her suicide as well.

Finally, in describing Jocasta in terms which suggest that she is a ghost returning from the dead to accost her son, Statius may be engaging not only with the literary traditions of furies, visions, and necromancy, but also alluding to recent historical events. Suetonius records that Nero claimed to be haunted by his mother and even had rites performed to call her back from the dead in order to ask her forgiveness (Suet. *Ner.* 34.4). So in the *Silvae*, Statius depicts Nero haunted by his mother's shade: *pallidumque uisa / matris lampade respicis Neronem* ("and you see Nero pale at the sight of his mother with a torch," *Silv.* 2.7.118–19). Boyle argues that the author of the *Octavia* repeatedly maps the relationship of Jocasta and her sons onto the relationship of Nero and the younger Agrippina.¹² Thus the ghost of Agrippina Minor in the *Octavia* may be another model for Jocasta's appearance in book 7 and strengthens the idea that Statius characterizes Jocasta as a dead figure returning to the world of the living in order to haunt and harangue her son.¹³

In his introduction of Jocasta into the action of the *Thebaid*, Statius plays with traditions surrounding her death, suggesting that her appearance is related to the furies and ghosts (both visions and those evoked through necromancy) and that she might play a similarly malevolent role. Such sinister suggestions color the tragic pathos of her mission of peace.

The illusion of Jocasta as a ghost or otherworldly figure is not maintained as she exits the gates of the city¹⁴ accompanied by her daughters; instead she becomes the figure familiar from tragedy. Jocasta's role in the battle between

12 Boyle (2008) 218.

13 The *Octavia* is a problematic text both in terms of dating and authorship, but I accept Boyle's suggestion ([2008] xvi) of an early Vespasianic date and thus a possible influence on Statius.

14 Although the gates (*portis*) themselves may be ambiguous and could apply both to Thebes as well as to the underworld.

her sons goes back to Stesichorus but is best examined in the tragedies of Euripides and Seneca. The differences between the Greek and Latin *Phoenissae* as well as Statius' treatment are well attested in the scholarship¹⁵ so I will limit my discussion to one particular element of Statius' account: the presence of Antigone and Ismene alongside Jocasta in her approach to Polynices. Statius emphasizes the presence of both daughters by describing the way in which they support Jocasta on each side: *hinc atque hinc natae . . . sustentant* (*Theb.* 7.479–81). Antigone is an important character in Euripides' *Phoenissae* and certainly influential on Statius' portrayal of her, particularly in *Thebaid* 12.¹⁶ But Euripides does not place Antigone with Jocasta when she addresses Polynices; instead Antigone accompanies her mother onto the battlefield after the death of her brothers. Seneca, too, in his *Phoenissae* affords Antigone a prominent role in Thebes with Jocasta,¹⁷ but she is not present when Jocasta addresses her sons. Ismene does not seem to have a role in either play.¹⁸ Statius' inclusion of both Antigone and Ismene in Jocasta's approach to Polynices is striking, then, in its divergence from the tragic tradition.¹⁹ One effect of the presence of both daughters in *Thebaid* 7 is that it provides a marked contrast to book 11 when Jocasta approaches Eteocles alone. But in depicting a group of women, rather than individuals, intervening in the political and martial world of men, Statius may also be evoking the Roman historical tradition.

When Coriolanus threatened Rome, the married women of the city gathered together in mourning together with his mother, Veturia, and his wife in order to reproach him.²⁰ The women were successful and their tears averted civil war.²¹ In his account of Coriolanus' mother, Livy seems to reflect this particular rhetorical aspect of female lamentation. He says: *quoniam armis uiri*

15 Smolenaars (1994) 213–17 and (2008) 223–5 for a full discussion and additional bibliography; Vessey (1973) 270–1.

16 See Heslin (2008) and Criado, pp. 291–306 in this volume on the influence of Greek tragedy on *Thebaid* 12.

17 This is somewhat problematic for the play since Antigone is also depicted accompanying Oedipus outside of Thebes in the first part of the play. Cf. Frank (1995) 6.

18 Frank (1995) 8 dismisses the replacement of Antigone by Ismene in accompanying Jocasta at Thebes.

19 Cf. Smolenaars (1994) 216: "This offers the opportunity for the pathetic description in 479–81, contributes to the highly emotional character of the meeting and is one of the causes of Polynices' decision."

20 On Statius' debt to Livy's account, see Soubiran (1969); Vessey (1973) 271; Smolenaars (1994) 217; Lovatt (2010) 82.

21 The Sabine women earlier also prevented civil war and are characterized by Livy as being in mourning (*crinibus passis*, "with hair having been loosened," Liv. 1.13).

defendere urbem non possent, mulieres precibus lacrimis defenderent ("since the men were not able to defend the city with arms, the women defended it with prayers and tears," 2.40).²² It is well known that family members dressed in mourning in order to generate sympathy at trials.²³ Mourning and its attendant gestures, then, had an important rhetorical function in Rome through their appeal to emotion, an important part of persuasion employed also by women at other officially sanctioned public events like funerals or moments of great danger to the state. This may be what Loraux means by the "effective tears of matrons"²⁴ in her discussion of the Roman family funeral. By drawing attention to the presence of Antigone and Ismene in *Thebaid* 7, particularly through his purposeful departure from his tragic sources, Statius legitimizes their endeavor by alluding to historical parallels.

The poet, however, also emphasizes the absence of the sisters when he returns to the figure of Jocasta in book 11.²⁵ In her second embassy, this time to Eteocles,²⁶ her daughters are not able to keep up with her: *non comites, non ferre piae uestigia natae / aequa ualent* ("no companions, no devoted daughters are able to bear an equal pace," 11.321–2). The contrast between Jocasta's embassy to Polynices in book 7, where she is part of a group with her daughters, with her solo mission to Eteocles in *Thebaid* 11 must be significant—and may also be illuminated by historical examples.

In the *Annales*, Tacitus is acutely aware of the potential threat that individual female lamentation posed for the emperor. The most famous example from within the imperial family is that of the elder Agrippina after the death of her husband Germanicus. Tacitus' depiction of Agrippina centers on her lamentation for Germanicus, which itself is directed towards her desire for vengeance.

22 A passage in Ennius also suggests the persuasive use of tears: *cogebant hostes lacrumantes ut misererent* ("weeping, they forced the enemy to pity them," *Ann.* 5.162 Skutsch).

23 So Quintilian says: *at sordes et squalorem et propinquorum quoque similem habitum scio profuisse, et magnum ad salutem momentum preces attulisse* ("but I know that mourning and an unkempt appearance, as well as relatives in similar garb, has benefited, and that entreaties have borne great influence for the welfare [of the accused]," *Inst.* 6.1.33).

24 Loraux (1998) 29–34.

25 Statius reintroduces the figure of Jocasta and connects her to her appearance in book 7 through her characterization as a lamenting female figure with rent hair and bared breast: *scissa comam uultusque et pectore nuda cruento* (*Theb.* 11.317). See Vessey (1973) 273 for the parallel scenes in books 7 and 11.

26 This too is a Statian innovation since both tragedies have Jocasta address Polynices and Eteocles together.

Agrippina used the death of her husband to garner public sympathy, demonstrated by her carrying the ashes of Germanicus back to Rome herself:

at Agrippina, quamquam defessa luctu et corpore aegro, omnium tamen quae *ultionem* morarentur intolerans ascendit classem cum cineribus Germanici et liberis, miserantibus cunctis quod femina nobilitate *princeps*.

TAC. ANN. 2.75

But Agrippina, although weak from grief and ill health, nevertheless unable to stand anything that delayed vengeance, climbed aboard the ship with the ashes of Germanicus and their children, with everyone pitying her because she was a woman foremost in noble birth.

Tacitus emphasizes the element of vengeance (*ultionem*)²⁷ and indeed, Agrippina's actions serve to implicate Tiberius in Germanicus' death. Tiberius evidently viewed Germanicus' widow as a threat—a point Tacitus emphasizes by calling her *princeps*—and eventually had her arrested and banished by the senate.²⁸

The younger Agrippina, perhaps learning from her mother's example, had been accused of mourning for Britannicus, a charge associated by Tacitus with her political machinations (Tac. Ann. 13.19). The women within the imperial family during the Julio-Claudian period, particularly the elder and younger Agrippinas, used their public position and displays of lamentation to attempt to improve their own positions within the imperial household, not always, however, with success.

In *Thebaid* 7 Statius raises the specter of Jocasta as a vengeful fury-like figure back from the dead to wreak havoc on the living, but undermines this presentation through her peaceful, if unsuccessful, embassy with Antigone and Ismene to Polynices. In book 11, Statius reintroduces Jocasta, now alone and this time approaching Eteocles (315–53) on another fruitless mission. In this penultimate book, Jocasta's potential to help or harm and her status as living or dead is again exploited by Statius, most emphatically in his account of her suicide.

27 Repeated later in the passage (*incerta ultionis*, Ann. 2.75).

28 See Bauman (1999) 144–9 and 153–6 for a complete account of Agrippina's political resistance and the *partes Agrippinae*.

Olim Regina: Jocasta's Suicide

At *Thebaid* 11.573 Eteocles and Polynices finally succumb to their mutual slaughter and some sixty lines later the poet narrates the suicide of their mother. Statius may suggest, then, that the death of her sons is what prompts her suicide, as is the case in the tragedies about the Theban war between brothers. Certainly by structuring the episodes so that Jocasta's suicide is narrated *after* their hand to hand combat, death, and exhortation to their shades, Statius indicates a certain order of events: death of Eteocles and Polynices, Oedipus' reaction²⁹ and Jocasta's reaction. Statius, however, introduces Jocasta's suicide in book 11 with *olim* ("some time ago," 11.634), thus suggesting that Jocasta's suicide belongs in the past, *before* the events here being narrated.³⁰ Furthermore, Statius describes Jocasta as terrified by the shout marking the battle's *beginning* (*inceptae . . . pugnae*) when she draws out the sword resolved on death. Thus, despite the apparent order of events narrated by Statius, Jocasta's suicide clearly takes place before the deaths of Eteocles and Polynices, and so once again Statius plays with the notion of Jocasta as the living dead: she is already dead in strict chronological terms long before her suicide is recounted. Yet in his description of Jocasta's suicide, as in her appearance in book 7, Statius draws upon a wide range of sources, both literary and historical,³¹ resulting in, at best, an ambivalent portrait of the queen.

In his description of Jocasta's reaction to the commencement of fighting Statius evokes Vergil's Amata, who despairs when she believes that Turnus has perished in battle: *pugnae iuuenem in certamine credit / extinctum* ("she believes that the young man has been destroyed in the struggle of the battle," *Aen.* 12.598–9).³² Like Amata, Jocasta is not named, but marked out as *regina* ("queen," *Theb.* 11.635 and *Aen.* 12.595). While Vergil characterizes Amata as *infelix* ("unlucky," *Aen.* 12.598), Statius transfers this epithet from Jocasta to her marriage bed (*infelix . . . lectus*, "unlucky bed," *Theb.* 11.541). Amata's suicide is witnessed and first lamented by her daughter Lavinia while it is Ismene who first laments her mother (*Aen.* 12.605–7 and *Theb.* 11.643–5).³³

29 That Oedipus is responding to the deaths of his sons is clear from the ablative absolute *sceleris comperto fine* ("with the end of the crime having been ascertained," *Theb.* 11.580).

30 Smolenaars (2008) 225 refers to the "relatively early death of Jocasta" but only treats the implication on Oedipus' role at the end of book 11.

31 See Smolenaars (2008) 225–33 for a full account of the traditions of Jocasta's death.

32 Venini (1970) xviii: "il suicidio di Giocasta (v. 634 ss) riecheggia il suicidio di Amata (*Aen.* xii.595 ss)." For specific commentary, see Venini (1970) *ad Theb.* 11.635.

33 For the nature of Ismene's suicide and her role in the *Thebaid*, see Hershkovitz (1998) 290.

At the same time, however, Statius subverts the Amata-Jocasta association. Perhaps the starkest contrast between Jocasta and Amata is the method of suicide employed. In *Aeneid* 12, Amata hangs herself:

multaque per maestum demens effata furorem
 purpureos moritura manu discindit amictus
 et nodum informis leti trabe nectit ab alta.

AEN. 12.601–3

Mad, having uttered many things through her sad frenzy, about to die she tears her purple garment with her hand and ties the knot of a hideous death from the high beam.

By hanging herself, Amata becomes a kind of Greek tragic heroine—perhaps even Sophocles' Jocasta.³⁴ Statius may be intentionally reminding his reader of the varied tradition surrounding the moment of Jocasta's death by recalling this earlier Sophoclean Jocasta through Amata. But in contrast to the hanging both of Sophocles' Jocasta and Vergil's Amata, Statius' Jocasta employs a sword:³⁵

regina extulerat³⁶ notum penetralibus ensem
 ensem sceptriferi spoliū lacrimabile Lai.

THEB. 11.635–6

The queen had brought out from the interior the familiar sword, the sword that was the lamentable spoil of scepter-bearing Laius.

34 Williams (1973) 478: "We are reminded here very strongly indeed of Greek tragedy, especially perhaps of Sophocles' Jocasta."

35 On the use of the sword see Venini (1970) 159. The first instance of Jocasta's suicide by sword occurs in Euripides' *Phoenissae*. In this play, when Jocasta comes upon the dead bodies of her sons, she takes up the sword of one of them (it is not clear which one) to kill herself (Eur. *Phoen.* 1454–6). See Legras (1905a) 125–9 for discussion of the influence on Euripides' play on this part of the *Thebaid*. Seneca's *Phoenissae* must also be considered an influence on Statius, perhaps more significant than Euripides, but unfortunately the incomplete text of Seneca's play does not include Jocasta's suicide. See Frank (1995) 11–12 for a discussion of the ending of the play.

36 The use of the pluperfect tense here may be another reference to the chronology of Statius' narrative, reminding his reader that the suicide had already taken place.

Her use of a sword is emphasized by Statius through word placement and repetition: *ensem / ensem*. Statius' use of *regina* here also, as noted above, certainly engages with Vergil's account of Amata's suicide, but Amata's suicide, though different from Jocasta's in the *Thebaid*, nevertheless shares with it a common allusion: Dido's self-inflicted death by sword and the characterization of Dido as *regina* throughout *Aeneid* 4 (e.g., 4.296 and 504).³⁷

The sword which Jocasta retrieves from the "interior" (*penetralibus*) may also recall Dido's rush to her pyre (*interiora domus inrumpit limina*, "she rushes into the inner threshold of the palace," *Aen.* 4.645) and her unsheathing of Aeneas' sword: *ensemque recludit / Dardanium* ("she drew out the Trojan's sword," 646–7).³⁸ In the *Aeneid*, the Trojan sword is a physical manifestation of the emotional and psychological harm that Dido has endured in her relationship with Aeneas as described in great detail throughout book 4.³⁹ The sword used by Jocasta too is full of symbolism: not only is it the sword of Jocasta's husband Laius, it also seems to be the sword that was used by Oedipus to kill his father (*spolium lacrimabile*).

There are strong connections between the description of the weapon that Jocasta uses in the *Thebaid* and that which is described in Seneca's *Oedipus*. In this play, a sword is seized by Jocasta (*rapiatur ensis*, *Oed.* 1034), and Jocasta suggests it was by this sword that Laius was killed: *hoc iacet ferro meus / coniunx* ("my husband lies [dead] by this blade," 1034–5). But in fact, according to Oedipus himself, he was holding a club when he encountered Laius, and indeed Seneca seems to indicate that Oedipus struck him down brutally with blows (*redit memoria tenue per uestigum, / cecidisse nostri stipitis pulsu obuium / datumque Diti*, "the memory returns on a narrow track that someone was struck down by the blow of my club, being in our way and given to Death," *Oed.* 768–70).⁴⁰ This ambiguity and an association in Jocasta's mind in Seneca's text becomes reality in Statius' epic where the sword is *notum* and symboli-

37 See also Williams (1973) 477–8 on connections between the suicides of Dido and Amata. Cf. Smolenaars (2008) 233.

38 There may also be a connection between the sword known to Jocasta (*notum . . . ensem*, *Theb.* 11.635) and the familiar bed at which Dido gazes before her suicide (*notumque cubile*, *Aen.* 4.648).

39 The sword is marked out early in the book as emblematic of Aeneas and his attachment to Dido (*Aen.* 4.261–4).

40 Boyle (2011) 291 suggests there is no inconsistency: "Seneca may have envisaged both club (for the felling) and sword (for the killing) being used." But I think Statius exploits the inconsistency or at least ambiguity for allusive purposes.

cally over-determined as the weapon of Laius used by his son against him.⁴¹ Whereas the sword of Aeneas reflects upon the action narrated in *Aeneid* 4 and gives meaning to Dido's death, Statius' description of the sword of Laius stands outside the action of the epic and calls to mind events not narrated, but certainly relevant for a reading of Jocasta's death.

Jocasta's suicide by sword evokes Dido's suicide in *Aeneid* 4, as well as the varied tradition surrounding Jocasta's death, but it is the contrast with the Carthaginian queen that the poet develops through allusion and imagery. Vergil avoids a direct description of the sword entering Dido's body and instead reports Dido's death through the eyes of her companions: *ferro / conlapsam aspiciunt comites, ensemque cruore / spumantem sparsasque manus* ("her companions see her having fallen by the weapon and the sword and her hands spattered with blood," *Aen.* 4.663–5). Statius, on the other hand, clearly describes the placement of Jocasta's wound and its effects. Statius' Jocasta stabs herself in the breast (*pectore*, *Theb.* 11.639), which would be a natural place to stab oneself.⁴² But by doing so, Statius' Jocasta distinguishes herself from the Jocasta of Seneca's *Oedipus* who passes over her breast and her neck, carefully choosing her womb as the site of her wound:

utrumne pectori infigam meo
telum an patenti conditum iugulo inprimam?
eligere nescis uulnus: hunc, dextra, hunc pete
uterum capacem.

SEN. *OED.* 1036–9

Should I fix the weapon in my breast or should I press it buried in my exposed neck? You do not know what wound to choose; this, right hand, seek this—my receptive womb.

Boyle suggests that Seneca is the first to place Jocasta's death blow in her womb,⁴³ and the symbolism is attractive and influential: Seneca repeats the imagery in the *Phoenissae* (*hunc petit uentrum qui dedit fratres uiro*, "seek this womb which gave brothers to a husband," Sen. *Phoen.* 447)⁴⁴ and the author

41 Cf. Smolenaars (2008) 231–2 who demonstrates that Statius builds on the earlier imagery of a sword used to kill both parents to one that belonged to Laius first.

42 See Grisé (1982) 95–9 for discussion of suicide by sword including the usual places for the wound.

43 Boyle (2011) 353.

44 See Frank (1995) 198 on problems with this line.

of the *Octavia* evokes it in the death of Agrippina.⁴⁵ Tacitus' account of the death of Agrippina at *Annales* 14.8.4 may have been influenced by both Seneca and the *Octavia*, thus suggesting a strong link between tragic and historical accounts of the deaths of mythological heroines and historical women.⁴⁶

The catalogue of the "early and ugly"⁴⁷ deaths of the women of the Julio-Claudian household in the *Octavia* provides a connection between the historical and tragic constructions of violence against women. Like Statius' Jocasta, some die by the sword. Julia, daughter of Drusus and Livia, is cut down by iron (*ferro* / *caesa est*, *Oct.* 945–6), Messalina falls by the sword of a soldier (*cecidit diri militis ense*, 950) and the younger Agrippina is cut up by steel (*ferro lacerata*, 956). By introducing Jocasta as *regina* and describing the instrument of her death as the spoil of "scepter-bearing Laius" (*sceptri ferri . . . Lai*, *Theb.* 11.636) Statius focuses on her position as a member of the royal family of Thebes and perhaps suggests a parallel with the women of the Julio-Claudian imperial family in Rome, particularly through her violent death at the end of a blade.

Statius characterizes Jocasta's death by her struggle to deal herself a mortal wound: *luctata est dextra, et prono uix pectore ferrum / intrauit tandem* ("her right hand struggled and with difficulty did the blade at last enter into her inclined breast," 11.639–40). In this way, again, Jocasta's death may correspond to recent female suicides familiar to Statius' audience. The historical tradition, represented by Tacitus and Suetonius, focuses on the ambivalence of women and suicide.⁴⁸ Tacitus' description of Messalina's suicide contains a similar hesitation to Jocasta's in the *Thebaid* and even stresses Messalina's inability to kill herself:

tunc primum fortunam suam introspectit ferrumque accepit, quod frustra iugulo aut pectori per trepidationem admouens ictu tribuni transigitur.

TAC. ANN. 11.38

Then she realized for the first time her fate and took the sword, but pressing it to her neck then her breast in vain because of her fear, she was run through by a blow from her guard.

45 Boyle (2008) 167.

46 See Barrett (1996) 190 on Agrippina's death: "her final gesture has won her a sort of immortal fame and the story deserves to be true (but may well not be), baring her stomach she told them to strike the womb that had given birth to Nero."

47 Boyle (2008) 283.

48 See Dietrich (2010) on female suicide in Flavian epics.

The historical Octavia too is unprepared for death (*nondum tamen morte adquiescebat*, “not yet pleased with death,” *Ann.* 14.64) and her blood flows too slowly to effect her death (thus prompting her placement in a warm bath, a gesture that marks her death as a constructed suicide): *quia pressus pauore sanguis tardius labebatur* (“because her blood, stifled by fear, was flowing rather slowly,” *Ann.* 14.64).⁴⁹

Jocasta’s hesitation, by contrast, may suggest a weakness due to old age rather than fear. Statius calls attention to her advanced years through the *uenas aniles* (*Theb.* 11.640). Unlike Octavia’s slowly flowing blood and indeed in contrast to an expectation of her age,⁵⁰ Jocasta’s fatal stabbing produces a great deal of blood, bathing the bed in her blood:

uenas perrumpit aniles
uulnus et infelix lustratur sanguine lectus.

THEB. 11.640–1

The wound bursts through her old veins and the unlucky bed is washed in blood.

The striking image of the bed bathed in blood recalls again Statius’ description of Laius in *Thebaid* 2. After delivering his speech to Eteocles encouraging him to fight his brother, Laius reveals himself by removing his Tiresias-disguise and, as if to prove his identity, exposes his wound and pours out blood:⁵¹

ramos ac uellera fronti
deripuit, confessus auum, dirique nepotis
incubuit stratis, iugulum mox caede patentem
nudat et undanti perfundit uulnere somnum.

THEB. 2.121–4

He ripped the branches and the fillets from his head, having confessed to be [Eteocles’] grandfather, and leaned over the coverlets of his harsh

49 For the influence of the *Octavia* on Tacitus’ account of her death, see Ferri (1998).

50 Seneca has Hecuba report Priam’s death which is characterized by a lack of blood associated with his age: *penitus actum cum recepisset libens, / ensis senili siccus e iugulo redit* (“when he, ready, had taken back the [weapon] driven deep, the sword returned dry from the throat of the old man,” *Tro.* 49–50).

51 Vessey (1973) 234: “Laius at last reveals himself in his true character.”

grandson; then he uncovers his neck lying open with the cut and soaks his sleep with gushing wound.

As in her first appearance in book 7, at her last appearance in *Thebaid* 11, Jocasta is explicitly connected to the figure of the ghost of Laius. While Statius does not sustain a characterization of Jocasta as the living dead throughout the epic, the poet regularly interjects allusions to differing traditions suggesting her ambiguous status as both living and dead.

The dead, representing the past, are variously treated in the Latin tradition. In his treatment of the dead in Latin literature, Dufallo suggests that there is a striking difference between the republican depiction of the dead, which can be conjured up as a traditional authority for self-promotion and political advancement, and that of the early principate, whose ghosts critique the recent past and bury it for good. Dufallo concludes by suggesting that later authors like Lucan and Statius use the dead (or living dead) to reflect on the past as a warning, although he does not treat the later literature in any detail.⁵² Statius' Laius clearly represents an inescapable past and a family curse that is doomed to repeat itself in every generation,⁵³ but Jocasta's living death more poignantly illustrates a particular Flavian ambivalence towards its engagement with the past.

Flavian ideology may have sought to bury the recent Neronian past in such graphic ways as building the Flavian amphitheater, a palace for the people, above the private urban villa of the preceding regime, the Golden House of Nero. But Domitian's renewal of Augustan moral legislation revived a more remote past to legitimize current power. Jones summarizes Flavian policy with regard to the past as follows: "to sever any Neronian ties . . . to stress any links with the more respectable members of the Julio-Claudian household . . . and to rehabilitate Nero's victims or those disadvantaged by him."⁵⁴

In the *Thebaid*, the dead are regularly resurrected and the past relived, thus creating a state of living death exemplified by Statius' portrayal of Jocasta. Statius' allusions to the literary tradition surrounding Jocasta and her death expressed in epic and tragedy also reveal an engagement with women from the recent past. The association of Jocasta with women of the Julio-Claudian house, especially the younger Agrippina, who embodies Jones' characterization of Flavian policy—Agrippina is at once a tie with Nero to be severed, a link to respectable Julio-Claudians to be stressed, and a victim of Nero to be

52 Dufallo (2007) 123–7.

53 See Bernstein (2003), 355–61.

54 Jones (1992) 34.

rehabilitated—reveals how an abuse of the past has implications for the present, holding it in a corrupted and unfulfilled state. In the *Thebaid* Jocasta walks the line between life and death, the past and the present, reminding Statius' Flavian audience that as the present evolves, the past must constantly be appeased and assuaged, despite attempts to manipulate it, and that the final word can never be spoken.⁵⁵

55 I wish to thank my reading group of Seneca's *Oedipus*, Rachael Eddowes, Roger Fisher, and Tina Campbell, for their contribution to and indulgence in my reading of Jocasta. I also greatly appreciate the patience and support of the editors of this volume who encouraged me through a difficult period.

PART 6

Predecessors and Contemporaries



Statius' Epic Poetry: A Challenge to the Literary Past

Laura Micozzi

“To come after” in literature is a difficult fate. All the more so for an epic poet of the first century CE writing after Vergil, who brought to perfection an ancient art, marking perhaps more an end than a beginning.¹

Since, as Feeney observes, Statius is “one of antiquity’s most self-conscious poets, heir to an oppressively rich inheritance,”² he does not seem to have any other choice than to construct his originality as epic poet upon his dependence on tradition and his massive indebtedness to his predecessors. An agonistic relationship with the literary past works as a catalyst for his epic poetry, which tends to move beyond the confines of genre, challenging virtually the whole epic tradition before. A large part of his work therefore starts from a dialogue within the literature, as his first interpreters saw (e.g., Caspar von Barth), and as he himself declares in his obituary for his father: *te nostra magistro / Thebais urgebat priscorum exordia uatum* (“under your guidance my *Thebaid* pressed hard upon the works of ancient poets,” *Silv.* 5.3.233–4).

There is not much about epic conventions that one cannot learn from the *Thebaid*: in it we find the greatest respect for the tradition, with the adoption of a structure similar to the *Aeneid*, and the inclusion of all the experiences defined by his precursors. One has the impression that the poet wants to show his strong familiarity with the “type-situations” of the genre, with an insistence on recreating scenes that the reader can easily recognize. By doing so he pushes to an extreme the innate tendency of epic towards both the expansive and the comprehensive, attempting to conflate within his own grand poetic design the entire culture of epic, and fully exploring its critical issues in an encyclopedic form³ that touches all genres. If it is normally the tradition that contains the author, Statius reverses this axiom: it is the poem that incorporates the tradition.

1 On secondariness, see Hardie (1993); Hinds (1998).

2 Feeney (1991) 340.

3 On the totalizing tendency of imperial Latin epic, see Hardie (1993) 11.

But Statius also adopts the risky strategy of declaring his debts: his assimilative and extraordinarily self-conscious genius is at its most original when most sedulously acknowledging its legacy. Calling attention to the allusive nature of his own poetry, the poet does not limit himself to imitating his own models but interprets them, and his references often include a kind of reflexive annotation. This poet, who incessantly rethinks his own relationship with the tradition, teaching us how to re-read it,⁴ also knows well its weight and weariness. In his work, driven obsessively to repetition and reworking, he creates an impression of *déjà-lu*, arising from the feeling that everything has already been said: “the world is weary of the past.”⁵ His Jupiter is tired of behaving like Jupiter, raging with his thunderbolt (*Theb.* 1.216–17), and refers to himself as a character, well aware of having already played the same role in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1.163–261). His thunderbolt factory is in a state of exhaustion too: the Cyclopes’ arms and the forge fires are tired.⁶ What effort for Pyracmon and the others (*lasso mutata Pyracmoni . . . / fulmina*, “thunderbolt after thunderbolt till Pyracmon grows weary,” *Theb.* 2.599–600;⁷ *lassum Steropen Brontenque reliquit*, “leaving Brontes and Steropes weary,” *Silv.* 1.1.4), forced to incessantly produce divine weapons when worn out!⁸

Then who does not know the story of Thebes: *quis nesciat*? With this form of *praeteritio* (*Theb.* 1.227–8) Jupiter himself hints at a renowned literary patrimony.⁹ But the other gods are also bound to their traditional literary poses, performing canonical actions: Iris is repeatedly forced to behave in the same way (*orbibus accingi solitis iubet Irin*, “she commands Iris to wrap up in rainbows as usual,” 10.81), Mercury goes to and fro between underworld and heaven (*itque reditque*, 8.49),¹⁰ and the hiss of Tisiphone¹¹ is by now an unequivocal

4 The *Thebaid* also contains an implicit view of preceding literature; cf. Hardie (1993) xii.

5 A very ancient feeling, if Aeschylus had already composed with the crumbs from Homer’s banquet.

6 Feeney (1991) 343; Hershkowitz (1998) 262.

7 Citations of the *Thebaid* are from Micozzi (2010).

8 Cf. Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 2.243; Statius is one of the privileged models of the authors of the late Latin period that find in post-Vergilian epic a sense of weariness similar to his own. But Claudian’s use of the trope of belatedness, like Statius’, is countered by his creativity; cf. Cameron (2011) 399–420 on the vitality of late Latin poetry under the influence of the Flavian writers.

9 Cf. *Theb.* 4.537–40: “do not tell us what we already well known from other depictions of hell; let’s hear something new”; Ganiban (2007) 66.

10 With a formula that Vergil used for the daily “coming and going” of the Dioscuri (*Aen.* 6.122).

11 Whose attire needs a “remodeling” (*Theb.* 1.111); cf. Micozzi (2011) 353–55.

sign also for the reader (*signum indubitabile*, 11.64). The Fury is also accustomed to "going back and forth" between the underworld and Thebes (1.101–2), which she knows only too well (*adsuetumque larem*, 11.109), worn out by the prayers of Oedipus (1.58) who "torments" (*fatigat*, 4.633)¹² and "disturbs" all of the chthonic deities with his laments (*qui Ditem et Furias . . . / . . . maestis solitus pulsare querelis*, 8.248–9): Tisiphone herself confirms it (*qui nos lassare precando / suetus*, "he that persists in wearying us with his prayers," 11.105–6). Statius seems thus to insinuate a comment not only on the narrative but also on the repetitive nature of the epic form.¹³

After Vergil, the underworld has become more "crowded,"¹⁴ and infernal monsters wear themselves out with work (*uincit opus*, *Theb.* 8.27), as in Lucan (3.16–19, 6.704–5) and Seneca (*Thy.* 21–3) where even Charon is exhausted (*Oed.* 168–70). Finally, in the *Thebaid* even Tisiphone experiences enervation: as she prepares the final conflict, she feels her own strength weakening (*Theb.* 11.92–4), and is able to recharge herself only with the aid of Megaera.

In the same way, the geographic horizon of the Statian poems is completely "occupied" by previous poetry: a "palimpsestic world"¹⁵ inscribed with its own poetic past and all the myths for which it has been the theater (like Chiron's cavern, which Thetis knows well because it was the scene of her marriage, *Achil.* 1.101–4). Every place has its own literary history and preserves the memory of the often terrible events it was witness to. Like Mycenae in Seneca (*consciis monstri locus*, "the place that knows this evil," *Thy.* 632), in the *Thebaid* many places are linked forever to their crimes: think of the rock of the Sphinx, site of the Theban massacre (*qui conscius actis / noctis et inspexit gemitus*, "that knew the night's work and watched the groaning," *Theb.* 3.175–6), or of Dirce's mountain, traumatized by the fate of Niobe (9.680–2).¹⁶ The places themselves

12 Cf. *OLD* s.v. *fatigo* 3b; V. Fl. 7.311–12 (*questu superos questuque fatigat / Tartara, pulsat humum manibusque immurmurat uncis* [*Medea*], "Medea torments the gods above and torments Tartarus with her complaints, beats the ground, and murmurs into her clutching hands"); Lucr. 4.1239; Hor. *Carm.* 1.2.26; Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.72–3.

13 Hershkowitz (1998) 251, 269.

14 Seneca, Lucan, and Statius correct Ovid (*Met.* 4.441–2): their underworld has become "narrow"; cf. *Theb.* 1.56 (*angustaque Tartara poenis*, "Tartarus made narrow by the punishments"); Claud. *Ruf.* 2.502–3 (*ob innumeras strages angustus Auerni / iam sinus et plena lassatur portitor alno*, "now is the lake of Avernus made narrow by the numberless victims and the ferryman is exhausted by his full boat"); Micozzi (1999) 370.

15 Boyle (1997) 90.

16 Micozzi (2007b) 96. A symbolic place for preserving the memory of a great literary past is also Pallene in Valerius Flaccus (2.17–23), which inspired the wood of the Gigantomachy

guarantee the repetition of the past, like the plain of Cadmus where the ghosts return (*adhuc*) to fight their battles (4.438–41).¹⁷

And if, on one side, the catalogue of the Argive heroes opens with an old and uncertain leader (*Theb.* 4.38–9), on the other, the walls once raised by the song of Amphion are now sad ruins:

ipsa uetusto
moenia lapsa situ magnaеque Amphionis arces
iam fessum senio nudant latus, et fide sacra
aequatos caelo surdum atque ignobile muros
firmat opus.¹⁸

THEB. 4.356–60

Even the walls of Thebes are collapsing because of long abandonment; Amphion's majestic towers show their bare flanks in ruins, and silent, ignoble labor shores up the rocks that the divine lyre had raised to the heaven.

In Statius decline becomes a trope, a key topic. The places of great poetry (think of the remains of Homer's Troy visited by Caesar, *Luc.* 9.969–79) have become the destination for "tourist trips,"¹⁹ like the cottage of Molorchus, a Callimachean scenario, where a "guide" shows the signs of the past presence of Hercules (*Theb.* 4.161–4), or the tour of the ruins of Tiryns, which recalls the decadence of Lucan's Italy (*rarus uacuis habitator in aruis / monstrat Cyclopum ductas sudoribus arces*, "a rare inhabitant in the empty fields points to the fortifications raised by Cyclopes' sweat," *Theb.* 4.150–1; cf. *Luc.* 1.27).²⁰

The poet himself continually needs renewed strength (*Theb.* 8.373–4, 10.829),²¹ but does not declare himself defeated. His poetic imagination takes apart the tradition and, with the raw material accumulated, aims to create a new world, producing the sensation of newness. His bold appropriation "is

in Claudian (*Rapt. Pros.* 3.339–52); cf. V. Fl. 2.22 (*seruat adhuc*) and *Rapt. Pros.* 3.340 (*adhuc crudele minantur*).

17 Micozzi (1999) 362–5.

18 Cf. *Theb.* 2.700, 7.456.

19 Micozzi (2004) 149–50, (2007b) 166.

20 Cf. Micozzi (2007b) 159–60, and the Lucan parody of the "guided walk" in primitive Latium (*Verg. Aen.* 8.336, 343, 345).

21 Cf., e.g., also *lassata* . . . *totiens mihi numina Musas* ("the heavenly Muses, so often wearied by my prayer," *Silv.* 1.5.2); Myers, pp. 31–53 in this volume.

itself a creative act, is itself creation," even if mediated and realized at second hand.²² Nothing is more original or personal than "to feed on others," as Paul Valéry would say. Paradoxically Statius' highly critical engagement with earlier literature and his ambition for a generic inclusiveness is the main strategy to achieve a new, strong paradigm of originality. The self-conscious, self-referential acknowledgment of his own belatedness becomes itself the basis for Statius' attempt to revitalize and reinvent the epic tradition.²³ The presentation of the literary nature of what the poet is saying indeed introduces into the poem a critical dimension, a distance, which invites reflection and irony. However in a work as dominated by pathos as the *Thebaid*,²⁴ poetic strength can derive occasionally also from a suspension of the artistic illusion, from an alternation of the register between empathy and irony.

The ironic dimension, which has been attributed to the poet of the *Achilleid*, emerges sometimes also in his "dark poem" on the faults of Thebes. Let us agree on the notion of irony: nothing further from the comic, nothing closer to a canny smile of disguised coexistence. Irony, which comes not from aggression but from complicity,²⁵ has always to do with the awareness of the artist who challenges his audience: it is a "knowledge of more" than what is objectively allowed by the explicit horizon of the text. This creates an air of familiarity with the reader who is thus made able to catch the intertextual irony implicit in so many scenes. I will give some examples in the brief sections that follow, which are devoted to the literary memory of Statius' characters and to his experiments with rupture from and continuity with his models. All these passages are facilitated by the literary memory that links author, character, and reader; the reader thus can take up the implied challenge to interpret and find himself at the author's side as an ideal accomplice in a poetics that will join to pathos a reflexive and more intellectual gaze.

Intertextual Memory of Statian Characters

In poems like the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*, which have been so densely populated by participants from so many realms of previous poetry, even the less famous characters show themselves to be aware of a long literary history. Old people, like Aletes, remember well the horrors which have already been sung,

22 Conte (2011) 156.

23 Feeney (1991) 339; Nugent (1996) 71.

24 Micozzi (2010) v–xv.

25 Conte (1989) 454.

signaled once again by a parenthetical gloss in literary memory (*meque ipsum memini*, "I remember how I myself...", *Theb.* 3.199) which alludes to Lucan (2.169).²⁶ By this explicit notation from the character, the poet signposts literary allusion to a learned reader.²⁷ This is a particularly Ovidian conception of literature: the idea that the characters in a poem begin to reflect on the histories or the fixed spaces which they inhabit, and allude to texts and writers (or to their situation in these texts or writers) that have treated them before. As often happens in Ovid, in Statius' epic we find many figures that are conscious of their previous literary biographies and sometimes intervene to modify those consolidated traditions: as we shall see, such is the case of Atalanta, Hypsipyle, and Ismene.

It is also the case of the Statian Venus who, well aware of her literary inheritance, winks at the future that had already been written in the *Aeneid*, when she speaks of her husband as a canonical character, always ready to sweat for her (*Theb.* 3.275–80). Here too the intertextual irony is facilitated by the memory that unites author, character, and reader, which cannot but recall the lively Vergilian scene between Venus and Vulcan in bed, where the goddess is very convincing in inducing her husband to set himself to work (*Aen.* 8.369–415). For his part, Mars, in the same scene, answers the goddess "like a book," addressing her with the famous *incipit* from Lucretius (*o mihi bellorum requies et sacra uoluptas*, *Theb.* 3.295; cf. *Lucr.* 1.1, 31–43).

Also, Pluto's assumption that he is being wronged is based on the memory of his literary experiences: giving rein to his indignation at Amphiaraus' descent into the underworld (*Theb.* 8.52–60), the black king surveys all the tradition on the theme, declaring he was present at a long series of *katabaseis* (*profanatum totiens Chaos hospite uiuo*, "Chaos so often profaned by living arrivals," *Theb.* 8.52), and recalls the wailing of the Eumenides at the song of Orpheus: a precise reference to his own past in the *Metamorphoses* (*uidi egomet blanda inter carmina turpes / Eumenidum lacrimas*, "I saw the Eumenides weeping disgraceful tears at that persuasive song," *Theb.* 8.58–9; *tunc primum lacrimis uictarum carmine fama est / Eumenidum maduisse genas*, "then for the first time, the story goes, the Eumenides' cheeks grew wet with tears as they succumbed to his song," *Met.* 10.45–6).²⁸ Similar to *memini* (*Theb.* 3.199), *uidi egomet* is alerting

26 Micozzi (2004) 142–4.

27 Conte (1986) 57–63.

28 Amphiaraus' reply, protesting he is different from Hercules and Pirithous (8.95–8), is only a variation, by antiphrasis, of Aeneas' call to his illustrious predecessors (*Verg. Aen.* 6.119–23), which leads right up to Dante, who, by defining himself unworthy of Aeneas and Paul (*Inf.* 2.32), is asserting his own place as a follower of the classical and Christian tradition.

us to a poetic allusion. It is not by chance that Statius uses the same signal also in the words of Chiron, who in the *Achilleid* remembers his own meeting with the Argonauts narrated by Valerius Flaccus (*olim equidem, Argoos pinus cum Thessala reges / hac ueheret, iuuenem Alciden et Thesea uidi*, "in time gone by, when the pine of Thessaly carried Argo's kings this way, I saw youthful Alcides and Theseus", *Achil.* 1.156–7; cf. *V. Fl.* 1.256–9, *Ap. Rhod.* 1.553–8).²⁹

Another very remarkable example of "recollecting character" is that of Theseus, who "re-memorializes" his Catullan past immortalized on his shield (*Theb.* 12.674–6): Ariadne's pallor (*absumpto pallentem Cnosida filo*, 676) is precisely that of the Catullan heroine, who, fearing for her lover, holds up the thread to the threshold of the labyrinth (*quanto saepe magis fulgore expalluit auri*, *Catul.* 64.100).³⁰ The "snapshot" of his struggle with the minotaur (*Theb.* 12.669–71), a tag that tells only a part of the story, follows a detail of the Catullan "monograph": the fundamental encyclopedia on the theme that guarantees the learnedness of the reader.

Even Antigone, in the last book of the poem, seems perfectly aware that Argia is trying to usurp her own literary heritage: the role of superlative *pietas* traditionally assigned to Polynices' sister in the tragic tradition (cf. *Soph. Ant.*, *Apollod. Bibl.* 3.7.1, *Hyg. Fab.* 72). When Antigone arrives to bury her brother's corpse, she finds that Polynices' wife has arrived before her,³¹ and shouts: *cuius . . . manes, aut quae temeraria quaeris / nocte mea?* ("Whose body are you looking for? And who are you that dare do it in this night that is mine?", *Theb.* 12.366–7). A little earlier, the same Argia, getting there first, wondered: *ubi incluta fama / Antigone?* ("where is the so famous Antigone?", 12.331–2).³²

There are many other Statian characters who are concerned with rectifying their personal literary histories: Atalanta, Hypsipyle, and Ismene allude with subtlety to their biographies written in other texts, trying to deny some compromising rumors about themselves. As in Ovid, literary awareness is a peculiarly feminine quality. All these figures intermittently appear to share the poet's heightened consciousness of the tradition, manipulating and rewriting their literary past in order to produce something new.

The case of Atalanta, which indicates in an indirect way that she knew of an ancient mythical version of her life, offers a good example of the subtly allusive way Statius transforms his material, while alerting the reader to the

29 Cf., e.g., also *Silv.* 1.2.85–6 and *Ov. Met.* 10.557–680.

30 Cf. McNelis (2007) 173.

31 On the women's competitive behaviour (*contendunt*, *Theb.* 12.458), see Bernstein (2008) 87, 94–101.

32 On Argia's proleptic imagination, see Micozzi (2002a) 62–5.

discrepancies between his history and the previous tradition. The beautiful woman, devoted to Diana, knowing well that the mere mention of her name provides her audience with an implicit bibliography, wants to present herself as a Camilla, and not as a Callisto! Therefore she intervenes, with an unrequested apology, to disclaim the mythographic version according to which she hid her little son Parthenopaeus to avoid the shame of her lost virginity (Hyg. *Fab.* 99, Lact. *ad Theb.* 4.309).³³ Thus, implicitly taking her distance from other literary figures (like Callisto), Atalanta produces her personal version of the facts, for which you have to take her at her word:

nec mihi secretis culpam occultare sub antris
cura, sed ostendi prolem posuique trementem
ante tuos confessa pedes.

THEB. 9.617–19

I did not take care to hide my son in the depths of a cave, but I showed you him, and confessing my mistake, I deposited him trembling at your feet.

Indeed elsewhere the poet says that (unlike, for example, Callisto in the *Metamorphoses*: the reader well knows)³⁴ Diana kept Atalanta among her followers (*ignouisse ferunt comiti*, “the goddess herself, they say, forgave her companion,” *Theb.* 4.258). The poet, allied with his character, thus disclaims the legend (reported by schol. *ad Eur. Phoen.* 153) according to which the goddess instead drove away her young *comes* from her retinue to punish her.³⁵ Atalanta’s *excusatio non petita* therefore sounds like an indication to the reader, reminding him that Statius has full control of the mythological patrimony but also showing that he has made the story his own. The poet, in short, lays claim to his own version through his character.

Ismene, who is presented in the *Thebaid* as a model of chastity and modesty, is not at all, as we can see, the innocent girl she wants to be thought. The episode of her engagement to Atys (*Theb.* 8.554–654), killed by Tydeus on the battlefield, shows the poet’s distancing from the ensemble of Theban legends, as can be seen if one compares it with an ancient version of the myth, attrib-

33 Cf. *RE* 16, 2 (1949) 1931, 64ff. [Fiehn].

34 *Cynthia deque suo iussit secedere coetu* (“Cynthia ordered her to quit her company,” *Ov. Met.* 2.465); cf. schol. *ad Eur. Phoen.* 151 (Schwartz [1887] 270); *RE* 4, 2 (1896) 1892, 7ff. [Escher].

35 Micozzi (2002a) 275.

uted to Mimnermus and testified by a *hypothesis* to Sophocles' *Antigone* (*hyp.* 3 Colonna), which even involves a lover of Ismene killed by Tydeus, of which I shall speak a little later.³⁶ Statius constructs an original episode, giving to the amorous affair of Atys and Ismene a typically romantic start for a "pair of star-crossed lovers," heavily influenced by the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses*.³⁷ While the young man, still not trained for war, dies in an unequal clash with Tydeus (who only casually takes notice of him, *Theb.* 8.583–4), in the most isolated part of the palace, Ismene, unaware of what is happening outside, mourns with Antigone the misfortunes of her family (8.607–20). In the end she decides to tell her sister about a dream she had had that very night:

incohat Ismene: "quisnam hic mortalibus error?
 quae decepta fides? curam inuigilare quieti
 claraque per somnos animi simulacra reuerti?
 ecce ego, quae thalamos, nec si pax alta maneret,
 tractarem sensu (pudet heu) conubia uidi
 nocte, soror."

THEB. 8.622–7

Ismene begins: "What illusion is that into which mortals fall? What deceptive belief? Can it perhaps happen that our care remains awake even during rest and that in sleep the images we have in our minds come back so clearly? See, I, a woman who, not even if absolute peace reigned, would dare to consciously think of marriage (for shame alas!), saw this night my wedding, sister."

A fine literary awareness emerges in Ismene's *Verneinung*: she denies having any desire or feelings for Atys, claiming that the very thought of her marriage is shameful to her.³⁸ And, to be more convincing, she distances herself from some clichés of falling in love: she presents herself as passively subject to an arranged union with a prospective groom she has only seen once, and even then unwillingly.³⁹ Ismene's claims of disinterestedness, however, have already been disclaimed by the narrator at the beginning of the story (8.559–60).

36 Allen (1993) 133–5.

37 Micozzi (2002b) 262–82.

38 Hershkowitz (1998) 287.

39 *Respexi non sponte* (8.630) denies the traditional effect of "love at first sight"; cf., e.g., Ap. Rhod. 3.442–71, Ov. *Met.* 7.86–88.

The young girl disavows having any understanding of her dream (8.633), but seems clearly disturbed by the awareness of its erotic undertones (625–6). Her pretense is similar to that of other characters in the *Thebaid*, where *eros* repressed or censured emerges only through allusions. But that Ismene's is a seduction dream is suggested by the reminiscence of Byblis' questions, who even wondered what her incestuous dreams of her brother could mean and whether dreams had any weight (*quid mihi significant ergo mea uisa? quod autem / somnia pondus habent? an habent et somnia pondus?*, "So what do my visions mean for me? Just what significance do dreams have? Or do dreams have significance?", *Met.* 9.495–6). Ismene's questions (*Theb.* 8.622–4) recall those asked by Ovid's Byblis: the allusion invites the reader to discover what the character means to conceal. Through her dream Ismene has become aware of her repressed desire for Atys,⁴⁰ as Lactantius had well understood: *excusauit quia illa uidere dicimur in somniis quae habemus in uoto* ("she made an apology because we are said to see in dreams what we truly long for," Lact. *ad Theb.* 8.625–6).

That Ismene is not so innocent as she would like one to believe the reader can deduce also from her literary preparation: the questions that preface the story of the dream (*Theb.* 8.622–4) are in fact a veiled controversy with the Lucretian theory of the *simulacra*, according to which at night one dreams what is desired when one is awake (*Lucr.* 4.756–8, 814–15). This debate with Lucretius is another indication that shows the deliberate dismissal of *eros* by the character, helping to illuminate the foregrounding of Ismene's character, inclined to deceive herself in matters of love. The whole passage joins pathos with ingenious irony and acute insight into human nature.

But why ever is Ismene so anxious to stress her sexual purity? Even Oedipus' daughter seems to have a reputation to restore! According to the transmitted text of Sallustius' preface to Sophocles' *Antigone*, the death of Ismene's lover did not take place in battle: Mimnermus said that Tydeus instead surprised Ismene while she was meeting with, or even making love to her fiancé.⁴¹ The fine irony of the poet revives this other Ismene for us, though the character is not forced to carry back all her uncomfortable past from text to text. That a story is not admitted in the poem is a further sign of the total awareness with which Statius controls the vast material at his disposal, and the liberties, if need be, he knows to take with the tradition.

40 Cf. Hershkowitz (1998) 288.

41 Cf. frag. 21 (= 21 W, 19 G-P) Allen (1993) 133–5; iconographic evidence in *RE* 9.2.2135.41ff.; *LIMC* 5.1.796–7.

An analogous attempt at the removal of *eros* emerges in the confession of Hypsipyle, worried about making her own past in the *Heroides* be forgotten. In her long tale in the fifth book (a homage to the contemporary epic of Valerius Flaccus), Statius' Hypsipyle is very keen to deny any kind of love involvement with Jason, insisting that she has been raped (*thalami . . . coacti*, *Theb.* 5.463), and swearing that the guilty liaison was undertaken against her will (*non sponte*, 5.455), although recognizing how much the hero could be seductive (*etsi blandus Iason*, 5.456).⁴² This clearly goes against what is implied by Ovid in *Heroides* 6, where Hypsipyle was hopelessly in love with him.

The credibility of her version, however, is called into question in her story about the departure of Jason from Lemnos (*Theb.* 5.471–85), where her thoughts and her poetic language show Hypsipyle still faithful to her past in the *Heroides*, casting her in the *relicta's* role she wants to obliterate. Once again the allusion, and the recognition of the model, reveal to the reader what the character insists on denying, unmasking the woman's feigned indifference. The evidence is all here: the accusation to Jason of flight (which recalls Dido's words to Aeneas, Verg. *Aen.* 4.305) and of having violated *fides* (*cui non sua pignora cordi, | non promissa fides*, "a man uncaring for his children and promised pledge!", *Theb.* 5.473–4) are the same as she herself had already addressed to him in the *Heroides* (*heu! ubi pacta fides?*, "Ah! Where is the pledge you guaranteed?", 6.41; *mihi promissi . . . tori*, "the marriage promised to me," 6.20): the tone of reproach and disillusion derives from a melting pot of models that created the cliché of the abandoned heroine.

The poet exploits codified gestures and situations to show the reader that Hypsipyle is not telling the whole truth about that old love. A long time has passed since, in Apollonius, she could point to an uncertain return of Jason, or since, in Valerius Flaccus, she invited him to come back to her once he had gained the golden fleece: Jason has not come back and has deceived her. In the *Thebaid* her resentment is more than understandable; and also the desire to give her audience a different version of the events. Statius' Hypsipyle in fact shares the synoptic view of the mythological story which is the poet's and takes care to "date" the actual event, alluding to the end of the Argonauts' journey as a by now remote fact (*certe stat fama remotis | gentibus: aequorei redierunt uellera Phrixii*, "to be sure his fame is known among far-flung tribes, the fleece of seafaring Phrixus has returned," *Theb.* 5.474–5): a precise reference *a posteriori* to Hypsipyle's situation in the *Heroides*, who is writing when rumors (*fama*, *Her.* 6.9) come to her about Jason and his deeds (6.3–4)

42 Cf. Nugent (1996) 67; Micozzi (2002b) 65.

But she offers at least one more signal of intertextual self-awareness, displaying her knowledge of mythical and literary history: as in Ovid,⁴³ Hypsipyle is perfectly aware of Jason's affair with Medea, the bloodthirsty woman from whom she contemptuously kept her distance (*sua iura cruentum / Phasin habent, alios, Colchi, generatis amores*, "those by the bloody Phasis have their own laws, and you, Colchians, breed far different loves," *Theb.* 5.457–8).⁴⁴ The mere mention of the fact reminds the reader of the animosity she herself had shown towards her rival in the *Heroides* (6.19–20, 81–108) when, jealous, she had wanted to admonish Jason with a prejudiced reading of the story of Medea, seen as a barbarous sorceress who indulges in spilling the blood of her own relatives.⁴⁵ And it is only while she is denying her similarity to Medea that Hypsipyle actually refers to herself the famous *incipit* from the *Medea* of Euripides (*o utinam iam tunc mea litora rectis / praeteruectus aquis*, *Theb.* 5.472–3; *Eur. Med.* 1–6).⁴⁶ For Hypsipyle, as for Medea, the meeting with Jason had been a fatal misfortune.

In her own self-presentation to the Argives, Hypsipyle tries to disclaim Ovid, declaring a break with her poetic past: considering her literary heritage, she struggles to become something new. But her self-construction is not convincing, attacked by doubts (as also occurs in other parts of her tale)⁴⁷ about the reliability of the internal epic narrator who speaks of himself from Odysseus on.

If for Atalanta and Ismene the poet conceives a real alternative destiny compared to the past, and with Argia he introduces a new *primadonna* who steals the role from Antigone, in the case of Hypsipyle it is really the literary self-awareness of the protagonist that disclaims her new version of the facts. Statius well knows that to present a character or to tell his or her story means making the reader aware of the place his new creation is claiming to occupy in the crowded space of literature, defining the relationships of his work with its poetic models, but it also means finding its own voice in the thick of memorable precedents.

43 Barchiesi (1992) 16; Hinds (1993) 27–8.

44 Perhaps also to stress, indirectly, her innocence in the Lemnian massacre.

45 Barchiesi (1992) 2.

46 That *utinam* or *utinam ne* motif, transposed in Latin by Enn. *Trag.* 208–14; cf. Catull. 64.171–6, Verg. *Aen.* 4.656–7.

47 Nugent (1996) 55–6; Casali (2003); Gibson (2004) 160.

Dealing with the Tradition: Departures from Epic Norms

Statius' aim to inclusiveness, and his habit of showing a complete control over mythical traditions and narrative possibilities, contrasts (but only apparently so) with his other favored Ovidian strategy which consists, if need be, of avoiding the schemes fixed by the models. To recall to memory the expected epic treatment of a subject, in order to show his refusal to follow to the letter the rules of the genre,⁴⁸ is another way to take possession of the tradition. The accusation the elder Seneca made against Ovid (*nescit quod bene cessit relinquere*, "he doesn't know what is best left out," *Contr.* 9.5.17) would be unjust also for Statius. Like Ovid, the poet of the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid* well knows where to stop, if he wants to.

Usually an epic convention can be reproduced, even if modified, because it has a long history that commands respect, but it can also be shortened and even omitted because it has a long tradition that threatens boredom. There are cases where Statius, like Ovid, decides to deceive his audience, only cursorily pointing to prescribed situations or elegantly evading them on purpose. His tendency first is to develop expectations in the audience and then to thwart them, perhaps altering the familiar pattern of a story: the poet's deliberate aim is to show the reader that he could have followed the model but chose not to do so. The irony also entails serious infidelity to the models.

Of course, one of the most eloquent ways to sidestep a convention is to give only cursory treatment to a subject that is proverbially long and inflated: it is enough to think of the rapid presentation of deserted Ariadne in the *Metamorphoses* (*desertae et multa querenti*, "abandoned and lamenting at length," 8.176), where the "fast-forward mood" avoids repeating the female lament just tried out by Scylla, or the Catullan-Ovidian lament of Ariadne, which is the model for it. I have already given an example of this technique within the *Thebaid*,⁴⁹ noticing how the summary of the messenger to Eteocles (a "torrential" passage in the tragic tradition) is there reduced to a single line (*qui stirpe refert, qui nomine et armis*, "he reports who they are by lineage and name and arms", *Theb.* 7.231): to repeat the long catalogue of the Argives together with the *teichoscopia* would have been unforgivable.

In this chapter I shall limit myself to only one example from the *Achilleid*. At the beginning of the poem Thetis, having sighted Paris' ship on route to

48 Rosati (1994a) 58.

49 Micozzi (2007b) 7.

Sparta, quickly emerges from the bottom of the sea accompanied by her *turba sororum*. She is in a hurry to prevent war:

nec mora et undosis turba comitante sororum
 prosiluit thalamis: feruent coeuntia Phrixi
 litora et angustum dominas non explicat aequor.

ACHIL. 1.27–9

Without delay, together with the crowd of her sisters, Thetis sprang out of her marine bedroom: the narrow shores of the strait of Phrixus are foaming and the little arm of the sea has not enough space to make the numerous host of nymphs line up.

Barth had already noticed the Homeric imitation in this scene.⁵⁰ But the explicit reference involves an elegant *oppositio in imitando*: by alluding to the Homeric scheme (already repeated by Vergil in *Georgics* 4.334–44), the poet, who trusts the reader to reconstruct the missing sequence, only points out the difference from his own narrative solution, which avoids the most inflated element of the tradition: the kind of catalogue familiar in poetry from Homer to Vergil. Statius' deceptive paradigm tends to introduce surprise, and his winks at the reader draw out the comic potential of the *topos* while drawing attention to the motif's conventionality.⁵¹

Sharing with Ovid, who was unpredictable in cutting long stories short, a high level of consciousness of the conventions of the narrative medium, Statius in fact comments on his foreshortened narrative: to say that the narrow space of the strait cannot find room to make the numerous host of nymphs line up (*angustum dominas non explicat aequor*, 1.29; cf. *Theb.* 1.146) is to call attention on his own choice of not making a catalogue, thus avoiding narrative delay (*nec mora*, 1.27). "To cut" Homer is an ironic operation after the poet declared, in the proem, he wanted to fill in the gaps left by Homer (*plura uacant*, 1.4). Wherever Homer is elaborate, Statius chooses to be brief. Scarcely an area of epic technique is left unscathed by his experiments, but his epic knows also the art of omission.

And he can also shape the way to make poetry after him: his influence on Claudian, who in *De Raptu Proserpinae* has inherited many of the strategies of

50 Barth (1664–1665) *ad loc.*

51 The narrator indeed is about to evoke (and then to let go) another great epic convention, a storm, similar to the one that opens the first book of the *Aeneid*; cf. Barchiesi (1996).

the *Achilleid*,⁵² demonstrates his textual authority as a model. Claudian's *longo post ordine nymphae* (*Rapt. Pros.* 3.230) awakens memory of the long catalogue of the Oceanids that accompany Proserpine in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (418–23): a catalogue which Claudian too decides to omit.

Continuing the Models: Follow-up of Stories from the *Metamorphoses*

A poet who is so involved in locating himself against the background of literary history could not but appreciate the explicit continuity of his work with that of his predecessors. Despite showing the reader his rejection of the tradition, Statius also feels the very strong necessity to create continuity with it. The wide range of literary precursors evoked at different points in the *Thebaid* is so striking that it invites us to view the poem as a kind of compendium of earlier epic, where the poet aims to conquer and to fix his own position in the great continuum of the tradition of the genre. "Following," and therefore continuing Vergil is, as we shall see, the wish he formulates in the epilogue; but he claims also a privileged personal continuity between the *Thebaid* and the *Metamorphoses*.

One way to assert his own relationship with Ovid is to create above all a chronological continuity with the Theban stories in the *Metamorphoses*. The subject that Statius in the proem (*Theb.* 1.4–16) declares he wants to skip in fact forms the nucleus of the Theban legends already narrated by Ovid (*Met.* 2.836–4.733).⁵³ But that is not enough: Statius also sneaks into the *Thebaid* some Ovidian narrative vignettes (disguised as similes, *ekphraseis*, etc.) that literally comment on or carry on stories from the *Metamorphoses*. One example is the story of Europa, recalled so many times in the poem as one of the basic myths of Thebes: the second book of the *Metamorphoses* ends with the image of Agenor's daughter sailing on the back of the bull, wrapped in clothes that shake in a breath of wind. But her voyage is not over: it continues indeed in a picture of Arachne's tapestry (*Met.* 6.104–7) and in the *Thebaid*. With his typical method of fragmentation and miniaturization of the model (which I illustrated in regard to the *Georgics*),⁵⁴ Statius frames the tale, unfolding it through the main narrative.⁵⁵ In one of these frameworks (*Theb.* 8.229–30),

52 Micozzi (2013) xx–xxiii.

53 Hardie (1990) 226 n. 13; Keith (2004–2005) 181.

54 Micozzi (2002a) 61, (2007b) 77–8, 103–4.

55 The reciprocal affection between Europa and the bull (*Ov. Met.* 2.861–63) is evoked in *Theb.* 1.181, 9.334; for another tag of the same story, cf. *Theb.* 11.214 and *Ov. Met.* 2.871.

Europa anxiously clutches the bull's horns during the crossing as in the *Metamorphoses* (*pauet haec litusque ablata relictum / respicit et dextra cornum tenet*, "she's frightened, looking back at the shore she's leaving behind as he carries her away, and clutching a horn with her right hand," *Met.* 2.873–4). Then, in the next picture, Statius gives us the "photogram" which carries on the famous Ovidian *ekphrasis*, where one saw the abducted girl lift up her trembling feet for fear of splashes of water (*ipsa uidebatur . . . / . . . tactumque uereri / adsilientis aquae timidasque reducere plantas*, *Met.* 6.105–7):⁵⁶ in the *ekphrasis* of the shield of Crenaeus, Statius in fact depicts Europa who, become more confident, lets go her hold and brushes with the tips of her feet the surface of the waves:⁵⁷

iam segura maris, teneris iam cornua palmis
non tenet, extremis adludunt aequora plantis.

THEB. 9.335–6

By now she is no longer afraid of the sea, no longer clutches the horns with her tender hands and the waters playfully lap the tips of her feet.

The girlish gesture and the security acquired are a real sequel to the situation imagined by Ovid. Giving new thematic relevance to the stories of his predecessor Ovid, Statius also makes Ovid's narrative modes part of his own (think of the story of Coronis where the future announced by Callimachus becomes the present in Ovid).⁵⁸

At other times continuity with the *Metamorphoses* is annotated through a reflexive pun, like *adhuc*. In the catalogue of the Argives of the *Thebaid* the bull Achelous still visibly retains signs of his Ovidian past (*Herculea turpatus gymnade uultus / amnis; adhuc imis uix truncam attollere frontem / ausus aquis glaucoque caput summersus in antro / maeret*, "the river, whose looks were spoiled by wrestling Hercules, even now scarcely dares to lift his mutilated brow from the watery depths and glooms with head sunk in his green cavern," *Theb.* 4.106–9). *Adhuc*, which may alert the reader to poetic allusion, is here pointing to the event recorded in the *Metamorphoses*, where the river god, defeated by Hercules, has disappeared under the waves, hiding his head devoid of a horn (*uultus Achelous agrestes / et lacerum cornu mediis caput abdidit undis*, *Met.* 9.96–7). The reference raises an occasion to negotiate between the

56 That also has a parallel in Ov. *Fast.* 5.611–2.

57 Cf. Newlands (2004) 148.

58 Rosati (2002b) 287–8.

time-frames of the Ovidian world and the time-frames of Statius' own poem:⁵⁹ to represent the continuity between the two texts contributes to setting the *Thebaid* in relation to the model. For Statius too it is vital to make his own time.

The Pride of "Coming After"

Comparing a literary work with works by previous authors encourages the view of the epic tradition as a continuum from which the poet would never exclude himself: in the epilogue⁶⁰ Statius takes up position with pride on the place occupied by the *Thebaid* in that *lignée*.⁶¹ He mentions Vergil's *Aeneid* and declares that his *Thebaid* is to follow its path reverently (*longe sequere et uestigia semper adora*, *Theb.* 12.817). This apparent admission of modesty, this "to follow" Vergil (*tener retro*, as Dante would say), attests to his determined wish to ratify his own inclusion among the classics.⁶² This poet, who has dared to challenge the hierarchies of literary history, declares himself not unworthy of his past, coming across as one of the most self-confident poets in Roman literature.⁶³

The true meaning of this *sequere* was well understood by Dante, who literally "follows" Vergil on foot, making him his actual guide on his journey in the *Commedia* (*allor si mosse, e io gli tenni retro*, *Inf.* 1.136). When he confronts his own poetic inheritance by meeting in Limbo the greatest poets of antiquity (*Inf.* 4.82–102), he also is very aware that "to follow," "to come after," means an assumption of status among the greats. And it was perhaps the model of the famous epilogue of the *Thebaid* that made an exceedingly proud poet like Dante say:

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- 59 For similar signposts of reflexive annotation, partly Ovidian experiments, cf. Kenney (2011) on *Ov. Met.* 7.84 (*casu*); Kenney on *Ov. Met.* 7.232–3 (*nondum*; on which, cf. also *Ov. Met.* 14.157 and Hinds [1998] 108–9, who compares with Verg. *Aen.* 6.897–901). For Statius, see Micozzi (2007b) on *Theb.* 4.24 (*forte*), 4.59 (*nondum*), and 4.126 (*nondum*); Micozzi (2010) 647 on *Theb.* 10.245–8 (*iterum*); Lovatt (2005) 153.
- 60 "In which is perhaps the most explicit intertextual reference in Latin epic," Nugent (1996) 70.
- 61 Hinds (1998) 91–3; Gibson (2004) 150–1. On the epilogue in general, see Vessey (1986a) 2974–6; Malamud (1995) 24–7; Braund (1996a) 7–8; Nugent (1996) 70–1; Hardie (1997) 156–8; Dietrich (1999) 50; Pagan (2000) 444–6; Dominik (2003); Pollmann (2004) 284–9; McNelis (2007) 22–3.
- 62 Rosati (2008) 176 correctly proposes reading the apotheosis of Vergil as part of a rite of succession.
- 63 Cf. Leigh (2006) 225.

E più d'onore ancora assai mi fenno,
 ch'ei sì mi fecer della lora schiera,
 sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno.

INF. 4.100–2

And then they showed me a still greater honour,
 for they included me within their goup,
 so that I was the sixth among those minds.⁶⁴

64 Translation by Cotter (1987).

Statius' *Thebaid* and Greek Tragedy: The Legacy of Thebes

Agis Marinis

Statius can be presumed to have acquired a deep knowledge of Greek tragedy under the tutelage of his father, whom he praises in the *Silvae* as a distinguished teacher of Greek poetry.¹ Given both the popularity of Euripides' *Phoenissae* in Rome, as well as the esteem in which Aeschylus' *Septem Contra Thebas* was held in antiquity,² the question of the *Thebaid*'s indebtedness to those works is inevitably raised. While our discussion will embrace both Euripides and Aeschylus, we shall lay particular emphasis on *Septem*, whose influence has only recently been foregrounded in relevant discussions.³ If in this, necessarily concise, overview we can hardly afford an exhaustive treatment of the echoes of Greek tragedy in the *Thebaid*, we may still aspire to assess the extent of its influence, while concentrating on some of its most significant facets—

- 1 See *Silvae* 5.3, esp. 154–8, with Holford-Strevens (2000) esp. 46–8 on the omission of Attic drama from this list of poets; McNelis (2002).
- 2 On the popularity of *Phoenissae* in Roman education (not least due to its rich plot and mythic intertext), see Cribiore (2001); its study inevitably encompassed the tracing of parallels with *Septem* (Cribiore [2001] 255). On Aeschylus' estimation among ancient critics, see Castelli (2000) 33–40; for a Roman verdict, Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.66—with Citroni's caution (2006) 6 n. 11. Generally on the impact of Greek tragedy in Rome, see Panoussi (2005); Gildenhard (2010); on the possibility of performances, see Nervegna (2007). For juxtapositions of *Phoenissae* with *Septem*, see Aélion (1983) 1.197–228; also Saïd (1985); Ieranò (2006) 78–84; Torrance (2007) 112–14; more generally on the literary debts of *Phoenissae*, see Stephanopoulos (1980) 99–126; Mueller-Goldingen (1985) esp. 14–36; Aélion (1986) esp. 61–85, 95–103, 109–118; Mastronarde (1994) 17–30; Papadopoulou (2008) 27–48.
- 3 Characteristically negative: Legras (1905a) 63, followed by Vessey (1971a) 376–7 and (1973) 69; *contra* Venini (1969b) esp. 464; Holford-Strevens (2000) 47–8. A positive appraisal exudes from Steiniger (2005); Micozzi (2007b); Parkes (2012); also Georgacopoulou (2005) (see index). On influence from *Phoenissae*, see, apart from these, Reussner (1921); Venini (1961b); Vessey (1973) *passim*; Aricò (2002); Papadopoulou (2008) 113–17; on echoes of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, see further below, n. 48. On Sophoclean influence, see Heslin (2008); generally on Sophocles' reception in Rome, see Holford-Strevens (1999). It is precarious to assume any debts to Accius' *Phoenissae*, itself being no mere adaptation of Euripides' play: see esp. Manuwald (2001); also Dangel (1995) 358–9; Mueller-Goldingen (2005) 110–16.

significant, that is, for the overall scheme of Statius' epic. Our prime point of focus will be the depiction of the leaders of the attacking army, particularly in the catalogue of book 4, where we may detect essential distinctions in their construal.⁴ Yet an inquiry on the Six shall inevitably encompass the Seventh: Polynices, whose role may only be properly appraised in tandem with Eteocles. We are inevitably led to the central notion of *furor* and its final culmination in the duel between Eteocles and Polynices:⁵ Statius' utilization of tragic models demands to be approached in connection with the issue of the relative standing of the brothers, a topic central to the epic, pertaining to the wider Roman problematic of sameness and otherness.⁶

Warriors and Emblems

Comparing the shield descriptions in *Septem Contra Thebas* and *Phoenissae*—a joint source of inspiration for Statius—one gathers the powerful impression that Euripides' aim in the shield-narrative (*Phoen.* 1104–40) can be none other than to “dismantle” the Aeschylean sequence of shield-descriptions at the central scene of the *Redepaare* (*Sept.* 375–676), to effectively annul the relation between signifier and signified, between image and reality: a connection all too evident within the Aeschylean schema.⁷ The Euripidean account appears “teasingly inconclusive and unreadable,”⁸ yet in a way—we may assert—that creates its own sense in the unbalanced world of the *Phoenissae*.⁹ Statius now,

4 For detailed commentaries of the Statian catalogue (4.1–344), see Steiniger (2005); Micozzi (2007b); Parkes (2012) 1–197.

5 On the resonance of Greek tragedy in book 12, see Criado, pp. 291–306 in this volume.

6 On the Theban problematic of the “Two” and the “One” as projected on Rome, see Braund (2006) esp. 268–71—taking the thread from Zeitlin (1986) on Greek tragedy; briefly also Criado, pp. 293–4 in this volume.

7 On the *Redepaare*, see Zeitlin (1982), with extensive analysis, and Vidal-Naquet (1990). On the shield-emblems in their historical context, see Catenacci (2004); Berman (2007) 33–86.

8 So Foley (1985) 128; cf. Saïd (1985) 504–8; Vidal-Naquet (1990) 299–300. The narrative has even been considered as interpolated: see Mastronarde (1994) 456–9 for a persuasive defense. Also Mastronarde (1994) 460–1 on the differences from Aeschylus—a key one being the substitution of Adrastus for Eteocles, which is followed by Statius. On variations as regards the names of the Seven in Greek literature, see Cingano (2002); concerning the Theban gates, see Berman (2002) and (2007) 87–115. Note that the gates are all but omitted in the *Thebaid*, save for a cursory mention in 8.351–7: see Venini (1969b) 468–70.

9 See Goff (1988). Note that in Euripides' *Supplikes* (857–917) the Argive heroes are presented in startlingly positive terms; see Storey (2008) 62–77. This departure is either to be read in

who eagerly draws in manifold ways from the Euripidean play, always integrates his loans into his own project,¹⁰ to which the “epic” descriptions of Aeschylus, the occasionally “static” character of his drama, often prove congenial.¹¹

Tydeus, who looms large in books 1 and 2 of the *Thebaid*, is the first to be introduced in the catalogue after Adrastus and Polynices (*Theb.* 4.93–115). Fierce and aggressive as he expectedly emerges, he nevertheless does not lend himself to facile assessments: most importantly, he cannot be regarded as a plainly hubristic figure, such a role being reserved for Capaneus. Indeed, the narrator is disinclined to attribute *furor* to Tydeus—that is, until his final horrendous act, which retrospectively colors all his previous behavior and denies him the *decus* of immortality.¹² Equally important for Tydeus’ appraisal is his close friendship and common traits he shares with Polynices, the latter even calling him *alius ac melior frater* (“my other and better brother,” 9.53).¹³ This special position seems to explain why it is Capaneus who heaps verbal abuse on Amphiarus (3.648–69)—not Tydeus, as in *Septem Contra Thebas* (382–3).¹⁴ Still, though Tydeus is certainly not the most unabashed hubrist in the epic (or precisely because of that), he can be regarded as encapsulating the negative dynamics of the *Thebaid*. Most notably, being rightly outraged at Eteocles’ deathly ambush, he plays the fateful role of urging Adrastus and the Argives to war.¹⁵ In this sense, his indictment by the Aeschylean Amphiarus as μέγιστον Ἀργεῖ τῶν κακῶν διδάσκαλον (“supreme teacher of evil to Argos,” *Sept.* 573) still stands: *dubiumque, adeo, qui bella gerantur* (“it is doubtful for whom the war is waged,” *Theb.* 4.115). Tydeus seems, indeed, to be “usurping” the conflict for his own ends.

More pressingly than Tydeus, Hippomedon calls to be read against his Aeschylean incarnation. What we need to ascertain is whether his central position within the *Redepaare*—in a literal and, more importantly, in a symbolic

a “straightforward” way—Collard (1972); Besso (2002)—or as a satire of ἐπιτάφιοι λόγοι: now Mendelsohn (2002) 187–96.

10 See Venini (1961b) esp. 400.

11 The extended epic descriptions of the Argive leaders and their contingents in book 4 is a prime instance; notably, the Euripidean device of *teichoscopia* (*Phoen.* 88–201) is reserved for the Theban army (*Theb.* 7.243–397).

12 See Lovatt (2001) 108–11, at variance with Hershkowitz (1995) 54–8 and (1998) 252–60.

13 See Bonds (1985); Frings (1992) 47–53; O’Gorman (2005) 32–7; Korneeva (2011) 99–103.

14 Cf. Frings (1991) 12–16; Lovatt (2001) 109; Fantham (2006) 158–60.

15 Adrastus leads the war *uix sponte* (“scarce of his own will”): see 4.38–40, with Micozzi (2007b) 77–80; Parkes (2012) 69–71. We will not deal further with Adrastus here, given his lack of prominence in either *Septem* or *Phoenissae*.

sense, given the heightened menace he evinces¹⁶—may still be maintained. A literally central position he indeed retains not merely in the prefatory enumeration of the five leading warriors at *Thebaid* 1.41–5, but also within the sequence of *aristeiai* and—nearly¹⁷—in the catalogue. Yet, what may this “centrality” entail? As is the case in Aeschylus, where the monstrous Typhon, archenemy of the gods, embodies the culmination of Argive hubris,¹⁸ it is again Hippomedon’s shield-emblem that recommends itself as a prime point of focus.¹⁹

perfectaque uiuit in auro
nox Danaï: sontes Furiarum lampade nigra
quinquaginta ardent thalami; pater ipse cruentis
in foribus laudatque nefas atque inspicit enses.

THEB. 4.132–5

The night of Danaus lives,
wrought in gold: the Furies’ murky torch
blazes in the fifty guilty marriage chambers and
the father himself in the bloodstained doorway lauds
the crime and inspects the swords.

Since Hippomedon—as a ruler in the Argolid, even belonging to the royal family according to certain mythical traditions—is at least indirectly related to Danaus, legendary king of Argos, the scene indubitably contains an allusion to his very self, casting an ominous shadow on the legitimacy and outcome of his venture.²⁰ Yet, more importantly, the crime of the Danaids can be regarded

16 As shown by Zeitlin (1982) 83–98; Vidal-Naquet (1990) esp. 288–92. See also Wilkens (1974) 46–9; Thalmann (1978) 111–15; Moreau (1985) 145–50; Marinis (2012).

17 But for the existence of the (intriguing) fifth contingent of Tirynthians (4.145–64), who are “roused to arms” by Hercules himself. See Steiniger (2005) 25–6; also Fernandelli (1996) esp. 82, 86.

18 See above, n. 16. Argus on Hippomedon’s shield in *Phoenissae* (113–18) clearly evinces a downgraded menace, although the warrior retains his “Gigantic” stature (127–30).

19 The description of the shield as *flammeus orbis* (4.132), recalling ἄλως in *Sept.* 489, is an eloquent intertextual marker; see Micozzi (2007b) 146.

20 See Klinnert (1970) 82–3; Parkes (2012) 104, 112; also Fernandelli (1996) 88–91 on the parallel with the *Aeneid*, where the crime of the Danaids is embossed on Pallas’ baldric (10.497–9), subsequently worn by Turnus (12.945–6). On the Vergilian description, see Putnam (1994); Harrison (1998); now Shelfer (2011). Note also that the Chimaera engraved on Turnus’ shield (7.785–8) bears the influence of the Aeschylean Typhon: see Hardie (1986) 118–9 and Horsfall (2000) 509.

as prefiguring the tragic crime in which the *Thebaid* culminates: intrafamilial and, significantly, perpetrated at the instigation of a father-figure. Indeed, aside from obvious differences, what Oedipus essentially does is, like Danaus, to call for a horrendous intrafamilial crime to be committed by his offspring: as we are warned by Laius' shade, in the Theban conflict *crudelis uincit pater* ("[your] cruel father prevails," 4.644; cf. 11.580; also 1.83–5).²¹ Moreover, the Furies, a leading motivating power of the epic, are present in the chambers of the Danaids, chambers designated as guilty—*sontes*, exactly like Thebes (1.2,²² while their "murky torch" (4.133) is an unmistakable sign of an ominous wedding ritual (Oedipus', or Polynices' ...).²³ But the Statian Hippomedon's shield is central in a yet more profound sense: firstly, it represents an essentially (and generically) *tragic* story, best known from Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy;²⁴ far from embodying a martial or heroic exploit, it betokens a treacherous criminal act. Further, by depicting a mythical crime perpetrated by women, the shield looks forward to the story of the crime committed by the Lemnian women, which, by exemplifying the workings of *furor*, acts as a thematic *mîse en abyme* for the whole epic:²⁵ namely, if the crime of the Danaids is inspired by the Furies, the crime of the Lemnian women is an equally irrational act, instigated by a woman in "maenadic" frenzy: Polyxo (5.92–4).²⁶ It is, indeed, to a raging maenad that the Aeschylean Hippomedon is likened by the Messenger:

αὐτὸς δ' ἐπηλάλαξεν, ἔνθεος δ' Ἄρει
βακχᾶ πρὸς ἀλκὴν θυιάς ὤς, φόβον βλέπων.

AESCH. SEPT. 497–8

He himself raised a war-cry; possessed by Ares,
he rages towards action like a maenad, terror in his eyes.

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- 21 See Micozzi (2007b) 148–9.
 22 On *sontes*, see Vessey (1986a) 2970 and Georgacopoulou (1996a) 182–3.
 23 Cf. 11.142–3 (Argia) and 491–2 (Jocasta); with comments by Steiniger (2005) 120–1.
 24 On its possible reconstruction, see Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) 40–55; Sommerstein (2010) 89–117. Notably, in the extant *Supplices* the Danaids bespeak a certain menacing hybridity, possessing male characteristics: see Moreau (1985) 195–202. Cf. *Phoen.* 1675, with Mastronarde (1994) 620.
 25 On the significance of the Lemnian episode, see Vessey (1973) 170–87; Dominik (1994b) 54–63; Taisne (1994b) 238–44; Ganiban (2007) 71–82; Gervais, pp. 226–31 in this volume. Note here Aesch. *Cho.* 631–4, where the Lemnian crime is presented as an evil of paradigmatic status; see Moreau (1985) 190–5 and Garvie (1986) 218. Cf. Hdt. 6.138.4.
 26 In fact, Polyxo invokes the crime of the Danaids when she incites her fellow Lemnians to their own crime (5.117–19).

The male combatant's martial mania is, thus, modeled on transgressive feminine rage:²⁷ we may, actually, draw a parallel with the *Thebaid*, where the madness conditioning the whole conflict is divulged through the prophetic ecstasy of a maenad whose vision of the warring bulls embodies an *alius furor* ("a different frenzy," 4.396):²⁸ war mania is, thus, assimilated to maenadic rage, a metaphorical schema equally evident in *Phoenissae*.²⁹ Tellingly, the maenad considers the mere narration of the *monstra* to be realized in the fraternal conflict as a worse trial than the horror evoked by the charge of the Amazons, archetypal warrior women (4.394–6).³⁰ What these metaphors essentially convey is the idea of a war mania which transgresses human norms. A similar notion is evidenced in Hippomedon's comparison to the centaur Hylaeus, an image intended to convey the hero's impetuous descent, on horseback, from the citadel of Argos:³¹

non aliter siluas umeris et utroque refringens
pectore montano duplex Hylaeus ab antro
praecipitat: pauet Ossa uias, pecudesque feraeque
procubuerunt metu;³² non ipsis fratribus horror
afuit, ingenti donec Peneia saltu
stagna subit magnumque obiectus detinet amnem.

THEB. 4.139–44

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- 27 On the dynamics of this metaphor within the *Redepaare* and its forceful repudiation by Eteocles, see Marinis (2012). For the maenads' warlike aspect, see *Theb.* 11.488; also Aesch. *Eum.* 25, Eur. *Bacch.* 761–4. Generally on metaphorical maenads in Greek tragedy, see Schlesier (1993) and Seaford (1993).
- 28 See Lactantius Placidus *ad loc.* Cf. the oak-tree "wounded" by the maenads in Atalanta's dream (*Theb.* 9.597–8, 627–8); also 7.466–7 (on Tisiphone). Further, Jocasta, rushing like Agave to prevent the fraternal clash (11.315–20), reminds us of the Chorus of *Septem* who mourn like θυιάδες ("Thyiad maenads") the fallen brothers (835–9), echoed by Antigone βᾶλχα νεκρῶν ("maenad of the dead") at *Phoen.* 1489–90; see Marinis (2012) 33–6. Cf. also the maenadic rush of the Argive women at the end of the *Thebaid* (12.786–96).
- 29 See *Phoen.* 784–97, where Ares himself is Βρομίῳ παράμουςος ἑορταῖς ("unattuned to the feasts of Bromios," 785), with Podlecki (1962) 369–72; Mastronarde (1994) 377–8, 380–3. Note the presence of warlike figures, such as Ira, Metus, and Virtus, in Dionysus' train at *Theb.* 4.661–2; see Delarue (2000) 124–8. Cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 302–5.
- 30 Note the Danaids' likening to the Amazons at Aesch. *Supp.* 287–9.
- 31 The etymological allusion (Ἴππο-μέδων) is familiar from Eur. *Supp.* 886; see Parkes (2012) 114.
- 32 Even the landscape is in the grip of terror. See Newlands (2004) on this motif.

Not otherwise, crashing through the forests with his shoulders and broad chest, does two-formed Hylaeus rush headlong from his mountain cave; Ossa dreads his path; cattle and wild beasts crouch down in terror; even his brothers are not without fear, until with a mighty leap he plunges into Peneus' waters and dams the great river with his bulk.

This simile effectively renders Hippomedon a semi-feral entity, with emphasis being laid on the fear engendered by his alter ego (*pauet . . . metu . . . horror*);³³ we are reminded of his Aeschylean counterpart, who is an equally horrifying figure: his glance emits terror, whereas the Messenger sees in him the personified Fear assailing the gates (*Sept.* 499–500).

What we may eventually assert about the Argive hero is that his essential trait is neither *ira* nor the horror of a direct insult to the divine, but, rather, what Klinnert aptly denotes as *Tatendrang*, an urge towards action devoid of any moral or metaphysical considerations.³⁴ Further, if the Aeschylean Hippomedon only partakes in an elemental substratum—that is, not the numinous aspect—of maenadism, his Statian incarnation verbally scorns Bacchus, to whom Ismenos adheres, and his rites (*Theb.* 9.476–80),³⁵ before falling an inglorious victim to the natural forces mobilized by the river-god. As Hippomedon engages in rhetorical invective, his opponent *nec saeuit dictis* (9.483): he responds in deeds, not words. Hence, the warrior, whose rage verges on the non-human, has eventually found in the river-god his “ideal” antagonist, namely a being that deploys formidable elemental forces. Hippomedon may, thus, be regarded as “central” in the sense that he represents the primal forces underlying the whole conflict: an impetuous drive devoid of rational considerations. What his fall effectively foregrounds is the futility of human strength, the precariousness of human effort, even as it may appear invincible.³⁶

In a different key, Capaneus exemplifies a martial *furor* coupled with hubris, a trait already evident in his angry rebuke of Amphiaraus in book 3. From Aeschylus, what he appears to have inherited is a primitive temper: in *Septem*

33 See Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 193–7; Parkes (2012) 114–7; the image recurs in Hippomedon's *aristeia* (9.220–2). Cf. 8.392–4, with Vessey (1973) 286.

34 Klinnert (1970) 119–32: 125. At 6.716–21 Hippomedon is compared to Polyphemus (and the Aloidae?); see Vessey (1973) 220–2; Lovatt (2005) 111–13.

35 Similar scorn of the Bacchic rites is uttered by Tydeus (2.661–8) and Parthenopaeus (9.790–800): the “unmanly” Thebes will sooner or later avenge both. Bacchus himself presents Thebes (rhetorically) as “unwarlike,” as he petitions Jupiter at 7.168–74.

36 See Vessey (1973) 297–8 and Lovatt (2005) 124–8 (foregrounding Hippomedon's quality as victim).

Contra Thebas he has a naked warrior, embodying crude war-mania, engraved on his shield (432–4),³⁷ whilst in the *Thebaid* he emerges as a gigantic, if not primitive, figure, leading his men on foot, *despectans* (“looking down on them,” 4.165). A whole tree he brandishes as a spear, while a giant shines on the crest of his helmet (4.175–7), recalling the warrior’s characterization as γίγας in *Septem* (“giant,” 424), as well as the giant depicted on his shield in *Phoenissae* (1130–3); notably, his assault on the walls of Thebes will be likened to the attempt of the giants Otus and Ephialtes to reach Olympus (*Theb.* 10.849–52).³⁸ Yet, it is worth remarking that his hubristic stance, culminating in his defiance of Jupiter’s thunderbolt,³⁹ is intriguingly combined with the pursuit of a martial valor which disdains trickery or dissimulation, a trait he has inherited from the Vergilian Mezentius and, possibly, from the Sophoclean Ajax.⁴⁰ An aspiration for daring exploits is equally projected through his shield-emblem:

squalet triplici ramosa corona
Hydra recens obitu: pars anguibus aspera uiuis
argento caelata micat, pars arte reperta⁴¹
conditur et fuluo moriens nigrescit in auro;
circum amnis torpens et ferro caerula Lerna.

THEB. 4.168–72

The branching Hydra, scaly in a triple ring,
lies recently slain: part, embossed in silver, glitters fierce
with moving snakes, part by a cunning device is sunken,
and grows dark in death agony with tawny gold;
around, in dark-blue steel runs the torpid stream of Lerna.

Notably, this Hydra is no mere transference from Adrastus’ shield in Euripides’ *Phoenissae* (1135–8):⁴² it forms an original construction, equally borrowing, in

37 See Zeitlin (1982) 70–2, 75–7.

38 See Parkes (2012) 131; on Gigantomachic imagery in the *Thebaid*, see Lovatt (2005) 114–39.

39 Familiar from Aesch. *Sept.* 428–31, 441–6, Eur. *Phoen.* 1172–86.

40 On this aspect of Capaneus, see Franchet d’Espèrey (1999) 200–3. On the connection with Mezentius, see Caianni (1990) 265–76; Ganiban (2007) 60, 146; also Leigh (2006) 226–8 on possible influence from the Sophoclean hero. On the rapprochement between Mezentius and Ajax, see Sullivan (1969) esp. 221–2; *contra* Glenn (1971) 129–34. One also recalls the praise of Capaneus in Eur. *Supp.* 861–71.

41 On the much-contested expression *arte reperta*, see now Parkes (2012) 128–9.

42 Capaneus’ Aeschylean shield-emblem, the naked torch-bearing man, is reenacted as himself scaling the walls holding a torch (*Theb.* 10.842–4, 926); see Georgacopoulou (2005) 209–11.

terms of decorative technique, from Argus on Hippomedon's shield (1113–18).⁴³ The crucial difference is that, in contrast to the Euripidean Hydra, flaunted as a menace to Thebes, this Hydra is a half-dead victim, as if its bearer was claiming a quasi-Herculean status: a “tragically ironic” connection.⁴⁴ As is the case with Hippomedon, we are dealing with a warrior who is unable to comprehend the ominous implications of his shield-emblem: a prominent motif in *Septem*, where the interpretive process is performed by Eteocles on stage.⁴⁵

In terms of mentality, the exception among the Seven is, of course, embodied by Amphiaraus, who is depicted in stark contrast with his fellow warriors, not unlike his Aeschylean incarnation. What distinguishes him in *Septem Contra Thebas* is his straightforward virtue, represented by his blank shield; a blankness that demonstrates, according to the Messenger, the fact that the hero does not merely wish to “appear” virtuous, but to be so (592).⁴⁶ In *Phoenissae*, Amphiaraus' shield is equally lacking any device, a trait exalted by the Messenger as a token of σοφροσύνη (“wisdom,” 1111–12; cf. 177–8);⁴⁷ this virtue, along with piety, is equally prominent in his depiction in the (fragmentarily preserved) Euripidean *Hypsipyle*, where the hero is allotted a central role.⁴⁸ The Statian Amphiaraus similarly emblemizes piety and it is hardly fortuitous that the poet chooses him as his preferred addressee;⁴⁹ indeed, Amphiaraus' piety may only be questioned at the moment he undergoes a radical change during his *aristeia* (7.698ff.).⁵⁰ Without resorting to a replication of the blank shield, Statius manages to retain Amphiaraus' sense of modesty

43 See Taisne (1972) 364, 374–6; Fernandelli (2000); Micozzi (2007b) 169–174. A parallel may also be traced between *Theb.* 4.168 and Aesch. *Sept.* 495–6 (Hippomedon's shield): see Steiniger (2005) 132.

44 On the abortive rapprochement between Capaneus and Heracles, see Taisne (1972) 374–6; Harrison (1992) 248–9; Ripoll (1998a) 149–50. For overall appraisals of the Statian Capaneus, see Klinnert (1970) 65–72; Delarue (2000) 83–5; Lovatt (2001) 111–20.

45 See analysis by Zeitlin (1982) 44–160.

46 See Moreau (1976); Vicaire (1979) 29–32; Hutchinson (1985) 132–3, 137.

47 See Aélion (1983) 2.327–9; Goff (1988) 143–4.

48 See esp. lines 392, 871, with Vicaire (1979) 32–9; Aélion (1986) 79–84. The play must have been a source for the *Thebaid*'s Lemnian episode: see Aricò (1961), (1991) 206–7; Vessey (1970a). A notable divergence, though, is that the (now sacred) serpent is not killed by Amphiaraus, as in *Hypsipyle* (frag. 757.907), but by Hippomedon and Capaneus (*Theb.* 5.556–78). In fact, this is but one instance of Statius' elimination of even potentially negative elements in Amphiaraus' portrayal in Greek sources; see Venini (1969b) 472–3; Parkes (2012) 135–6.

49 Georgacopoulou (2005) 32–7, 41–2. On Amphiaraus' figure in the *Thebaid* and the reworking of Greek models, see also Ahl (1986) 2863–6; Olivi (1996); Fantham (2006).

50 See Vessey (1973) 260–2; Smolenaars (1994) 331–43; Lovatt (2001) 104–8.

and piety by having the slain Python depicted on his shield. This mythical incident, emblematic for Statius' epic (narrated at the beginning [1.561–71] as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* [1.438–51]),⁵¹ is a most appropriate symbol for Apollo's devout follower. His lack of pretentiousness is conveyed through the austere conciseness of the description,⁵² the marked absence of elaborate *ekphrasis* or hyperbole: *procul ipse graui metuendus in hasta / eminent et clipeo uictum Pythona coruscat* ("he himself stands out from afar, terrible with stern spear, and flashes the vanquished Python on his shield," 4.221–2). The syntax is eloquent: *ipse* directs our attention to the figure of the warrior, while *et* introduces the shield as a mere appendage to his *Gestalt*. Though brightly shining, the shield is denied any autonomous standing; the warrior remains, instead, the principal point of focus: *eminent...coruscat*. Meanwhile, the notion of plain martial valor is equally a trait of Amphiaraus' Arcadian soldiers, who are nurtured by Pan and possess a *nuda uirtus* ("naked valor," 4.229).⁵³

Moving on to Parthenopaeus, what distinguishes him is an "innocent" urge for battle, reflected in his shield:

imbelli parma pictus Calydonia matris
proelia...

THEB. 4.267–8

His unwarlike shield is adorned with his mother's
Calydonian battles...

We are reminded of his Euripidean namesake, whose shield depicts Atalanta killing the "Aetolian boar" with her bow (*Phoen.* 1107–9).⁵⁴ In both cases, there is a clear departure from the menace embodied by the Sphinx, snatching a Theban citizen on Parthenopaeus' shield in *Septem* (539–44); notably, the Sphinx is now engraved on Polynices' sword (*Theb.* 4.87).⁵⁵ Parthenopaeus' immature age, in Aeschylus, is suggestive of a threatening borderline identity, accentuated through his hubristic scorn of Ares and pointedly embodied by the hybrid Sphinx: he thus defies essential categories on which Eteocles constructs

51 See Taisne (1972) 366–7; McNelis (2007) 29–30; Newlands (2009a); also Gervais, pp. 222–6 in this volume.

52 For a comparison of the formal structure of individual descriptions within the catalogue, see Steiniger (2005) 14–26.

53 See Micozzi (2007b) 204–5.

54 See Parkes (2012) 167.

55 See Parkes (2012) 90.

his worldview (*Sept.* 526–49).⁵⁶ Parthenopaeus in *Phoenissae*, though redoubtable in his war mania, is scarcely a hubrist (*Phoen.* 1153–62),⁵⁷ and thus is a more appropriate model for Statius' sympathetic *Heldenknabe*, who, despite provoking the gods at times, is protected and pitied by Diana, to be finally evoked, in a moving manner, at the very end of the epic (*Theb.* 12.805–7).⁵⁸

Indeed, what may be deduced from this overview of warriors and emblems is that Statius carefully appropriates elements from Greek tragedy in order to trace particular nuances in the presentation of the leading warriors. What is more, if we are to judge from Hippomedon's "centrality" and the overall careful structuring of the catalogue, characterized by artful transitions and oppositions, what Statius envisages is not a mere ordering, but a pregnant schema, which not least *qua* schema betokens an Aeschylean narrative program.⁵⁹

The Brothers

Aeschylus' *Septem Contra Thebas* is not clear about the origins of the conflict between the brothers;⁶⁰ what we know for sure is that Polynices has been banished from Thebes and that he claims to have justice on his side (642–8). Still, the very fact that Polynices is bent on exacting revenge on his native city, combined with Amphiaraus' reprimands (576–89), clearly points to a mentality by no means exemplifying piety and honorable conduct. On the other hand, Eteocles is, at least until line 653, the dutiful king and protector of Thebes against an army of fierce attackers. All this changes, though, with his decision to confront his brother at the Seventh Gate; indeed, upon hearing the horrible news of fratricide, the Chorus bewails the common fate of the brothers without making any distinction, but instead identifying them, even in name: ὀρθῶς κατ' ἐπωυμίαν . . . πολυνεικεῖς / ὄλοντ' ἀσεβεῖ διανοίᾳ ("all too true to their name . . . with 'much strife' they were killed in their impious purpose," 829–31).⁶¹ Now, Euripides' originality does not lie in a downright justification of Polynices—though justice is initially ascribed to his claims (*Phoen.* 154;

56 See Zeitlin (1982) 98–109.

57 See Goff (1988) 139–41.

58 For general appraisals, see Frings (1991) 19–26; Schetter (1960) 43–8.

59 It is not possible to deal further here with the structure and interpretation of such a schema: see Kytzler (1969) 222–5; Vessey (1973) 202–5; Georgacopoulou (1996b) 104–6; now Parkes (2012) 62–4. See also above, n. 17.

60 See below, n. 63.

61 The same etymological insight resounds in *Phoen.* 636–7 and 1493.

cf. 74–6, 258–60)—but in a more pointed *balance* between the brothers.⁶² This balance becomes manifest during Jocasta’s attempt at an arbitration: while Eteocles expresses a tyrannical quest for power as an end in itself, Polynices, who begins by vindicating his rights, does not emerge as morally superior, but soon ends up bluntly expressing his wish to kill his brother (622). Statius follows Euripides in ascribing to Polynices a *melior causa*: it is again the “better” brother who wages war against his own city. . . .⁶³ But this moral superiority is asserted only to be consistently undermined: already in Polynices’ *spes anxia* (“fretful hope,” *Theb.* 1.322) ominously resounds his irate exclamation in *Phoenissae*: ἐλπίδες δ’ οὐπὼ καθεύδουσ’[ι] (“but hope never sleeps,” 634). The portrayal of a flawed but potentially—or only comparatively—virtuous Polynices⁶⁴ helps Statius to drive home his somber sense of the inability of mortals to retain their virtue and integrity.

As we arrive in book 11, Eteocles’ and Polynices’ divergent paths towards fratricide can be regarded as shedding light on their characters. The stance of the brothers is, indeed, painted in fine strokes: for instance, when Polynices declares to Adrastus his decision to confront his brother (*Theb.* 11.155–92), the impact of the Fury has been explicitly mentioned (150–4); yet, when Eteocles responds to Creon (298–308), no such hint is provided. A reason could be that Eteocles is hardly in need of her incitement; still, at this juncture, we have actually attested an effort to restrain *furor*, Eteocles being reluctant to proceed: *dubium et pugnas cunctantem* (“in doubt, delaying the combat,” 268). The army encourages the king to abstain from the fateful duel, but then it is Creon, overwhelmed by pain and resentment in the wake of Menoeceus’ loss, who challenges Eteocles into confronting his brother. Indeed, after accusing Creon

62 See Aélion (1983) 1.211–19.

63 A notable divergence from Euripides is that Eteocles rules first not due to primogeniture (to which he alludes at 2.428–9) but following the casting of lots (1.164–5): an arrangement foregrounding the “parity” of the brothers and their mutual hate (see Venini [1961b] 396–7); its earlier attestation is in Stesichorus, *PMGF* 222 (b) 218–24: see Ugolini (1990) 71–4. Further, while in Euripides (*Phoen.* 69–74, 473–80; *Supp.* 150) the division of regal power is intended as a means to *avoid* the paternal curse, in the *Thebaid* it follows as its consequence (1.126–43): see Vessey (1971a) 378; Aricò (2002) 181–2. In *Septem*, it is not clear how Eteocles acquired regal power: see Hutchinson (1985) xxv–xxx; also Berman (2007) 117–48. Note, however, that the motif of “apportioning by lot,” prominent through the play, is applied to the duel (e.g., *Sept.* 906–10): see Thalmann (1982) 63–78; Berman (2007) 148–77.

64 “Flawed”: note particularly his hypocrisy at 3.381–2. “Potentially virtuous,” as at 7.688–9: reluctant to kill fellow-Thebans. For a succinct discussion of both brothers’ character, see Dominik (1994c) 217–21; cf. Dominik (1994b) 79–88.

of harboring a secret ambition to succeed him to the throne,⁶⁵ he abruptly proclaims his determination to fight Polynices: *sed arma, / arma prius, famuli!* ("but first—arms, arms, my servants!", 305–6): a sudden apostrophe recalling the Aeschylean Eteocles' assertive command to bring him arms (*Sept.* 675–6), which marks the climactic end of the fateful monologue declaring his intention to face his brother at the Seventh Gate.

Admittedly, Polynices exhibits a certain amount of moral awareness, evident through his exclamation *exsoluere fas sit / quae merui* ("let me be allowed to pay what I deserve," *Theb.* 11.162–3); he equally possesses the mental lucidity to admit, partly at least, his own share of responsibility, alongside the supernatural causation determining his fate (188–9).⁶⁶ Yet, if Polynices displays a distinctly tragic "psychology," Eteocles is, unexpectedly again, accredited with a stance of tragically heroic resolve, being compared by the narrator to Hercules devoured by the flames on Mount Oeta (234–8). The process of identification between the brothers takes one final turn at the last moments prior to their confrontation. When *Pietas* briefly approaches the battlefield, tears begin to run from the eyes of the combatants (475–6): we recall the thwarted tear of the Aeschylean Eteocles at the Messenger's announcement of Polynices' posting at the Seventh Gate: ὦ πανδάκρυτον ἄμὸν Οἰδίπου γένος... ἀλλ' οὔτε κλαίειν οὔτ' ὀδύρεσθαι πρέπει ("O steeped in tears, our house of Oedipus... But it is not proper to cry or lament," *Sept.* 654–6).⁶⁷ From those momentary tears, we return to the Fury-inspired behavior, as *Pietas* is being chased away. Eteocles is expectedly *impius* (*Theb.* 11.499), yet Polynices? He engages in a prayer to the gods, calling for the realization of the *nefas* set in motion by Oedipus (504–8); notably, his sinister vow *piabo manus* ("I shall purify my hands," 506)⁶⁸ resonates as an absurd reversal, if not a defiant dismissal, of the stark warning of the Aeschylean Chorus: οὐκ ἔστι γῆρας τοῦδε τοῦ μιάσματος ("of that pollution there is no growing old," *Sept.* 682).⁶⁹ The fact that *piabo manus* is not heard within a more or less cold-blooded altercation prior to the battle, but in the wake of bloody combat and after considerable wavering, as well as relentless pressing from supernatural powers, lends to it some of the tragic

65 Echoing his father in Soph. *OT* 532–42.

66 Compare Hypsipyle's notion of parallel motivation: both divine and human (5.57–8).

67 Cf. *Theb.* 11.193–5.

68 At the antipodes of the exemplary—and salutary—*piaculum* of Menoeceus: 10.799, with Vessey (1973) 121–2.

69 See Cameron (1970) 109–15; Hutchinson (1985) 154. Note that the μιάσμα of fratricide is not thematized in *Phoenissae* (it is only mentioned by the Chorus at 1050–4). In Statius, the shades of the brothers are, in fact, "polluting" Tartarus; see 11.574–9, with Bessone (2011) 81–2.

quality of Eteocles' eventual surrender—even acquiescence—to his fate in *Septem Contra Thebas* (see esp. 686–704). Polynices continues his prayer by expressing his wish *to die* and to kill his brother with the same sword, only to be seen, even momentarily, by the perishing Eteocles, to be in possession of the scepter (*Theb.* 11.507–8). This prayer, by ruling out the prospect of survival, exposes the futility and absurdity of the duel—and, implicitly, of the whole war (cf. 11.152–4)⁷⁰—while simultaneously recalling the Aeschylean Polynices, who contemplates, in his own vow, only *mutual* fratricide or, otherwise, to survive and banish his brother from the land (*Sept.* 636–8). Contrary to Aeschylus, however, in both Euripides and Statius the duel ensues *after* the city has been saved: a sequence which underlines its grounding in mutual hate.⁷¹ Yet, it is significant that in the *Thebaid* it is Polynices, not Eteocles, who first challenges his brother to single combat (11.243–5) and, more importantly, it is he, again, who hastens to despoil his fallen brother (556–62).⁷² What the Greek tragic echoes ultimately foreground—we may now assert—is the insurmountable difficulty of constructing a rigid distinction between the brothers; indeed, their “inter-textual identities . . . are just as volatile as their intratextual ones.”⁷³

The Euripidean Jocasta's attempt at a reconciliation between her sons (*Phoen.* 355–637)⁷⁴ is split, in the *Thebaid*, between her rush to Polynices' camp in book 7 (474–563) and her confrontation with Eteocles in book 11 (315–53),⁷⁵ while, in her stead, it is Antigone who addresses a plea to Polynices at 11.354–82.⁷⁶ The

70 As Lefèvre (2008) 898 points out, it is not only the *mode* of the criminal undertakings in the *Thebaid* that is nonsensical (*sinnlos*), but their very aim. See analysis by Dominik (1994b) 100–11.

71 On the brothers' mutual hate in the *Thebaid*, see Frings (1992) 11–46; cf. Aélion (1983) 1.224–5 on *Phoenissae*.

72 Contrast *Phoen.* 1223–36 and 1416–22, respectively; see Dominik (1994b) 79–83, 87–8, (1994c) 186–8. On Euripidean and Aeschylean echoes at the description of the duel itself, see Schetter (1960) 114–18; Vessey (1973) 277–9; Ganiban (2007) 185–90.

73 Ganiban (2007) 191; see also discussion by Korneeva (2011) 35–69.

74 Euripides must have been the first to involve Jocasta in a mediation scene *after* the beginning of the war: see Aélion (1983) 1.198–201. The “mother” (apparently Jocasta) had already a significant role in Stesichorus, *PMGF* 222 (b); see now Ercoles and Fiorentini (2011) esp. 29–30.

75 On the influence of *Phoenissae* in these passages, see Vessey (1971c); specifically on 7.474–563, see Smolenaars (1994) 213–53. The most noted Euripidean echo is *quid aufers lumina* (“why are you turning your eyes away?”, *Theb.* 7.508, to Polynices), corresponding to *Phoen.* 454–6.

76 See discussion of these interventions by Frings (1991) 106–35. On Antigone's role in the *Thebaid* in relation to prior literary tradition, see Zimmermann (1993) 252–64; also Vessey (1973) 205–9 (on the *teichoscopia*, 7.243–373) and Heslin (2008) esp. 116–17 (on book 12).

fact that a Euripidean scene of arbitration is passionately advocated by Jocasta (7.508–10), yet is never allowed to take place, is itself telling of the irreversible drive towards *nefas*; at the same time, it is clear that a rapidly evolving scene would be more apt for the theatre than for the *Thebaid's* epic development.⁷⁷ Still, in a manner reminiscent of *Phoenissae*, Jocasta strives to keep an equal distance between her sons, though acknowledging in her plea a moral edge to Polynices. However, this edge is effectively undercut by her own authoritative voice, as she entreats her son to assent to an arbitration and, only if it fails, to proceed then *causa meliore* (7.510): the assertion of Polynices' justice by the narrator (*melior causa*, "a better cause," 4.79)—and Tydeus, for that matter—is, therefore, implicitly challenged by someone who naturally boasts a more intimate knowledge of Polynices.⁷⁸ In Euripides as well, he is reprimanded by Jocasta (*Phoen.* 568–83), who pointedly concludes her speech with a joint appeal to her sons in duals (584–5).⁷⁹ Compared with her Euripidean incarnation, the Statian Jocasta is distinguished by her moral awareness (*Theb.* 7.512–13), as well as her heightened pathos (7.514–15).⁸⁰ Both these traits enhance her "tragic" stature, equally manifested through her mode of suicide, again marking a departure from *Phoenissae*: instead of killing herself on the battlefield over her dying sons (*Phoen.* 1455–9), she ends her life alone, but for Ismene, in her marriage-chamber (*Theb.* 11.634–47).⁸¹ Jocasta's "tragic" stance effectively differentiates her from the world of men, who fatally dominate the action of the *Thebaid*. Indeed, women possess a clearer vision than men and represent a world where values are still held in reverence.⁸² If in Euripides it is Jocasta and Antigone, as well as the distanced Chorus,⁸³ who fulfill this role, in Aeschylus it is the Chorus who makes insistent efforts to prevent Eteocles from confronting his brother (*Sept.* 677–719). In Statius, alongside the women, exemplary is

77 Statius also desists (sparing himself?) from an iteration of the famous closure of Eteocles' speech, allegedly flaunted by Caesar: εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι / κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν, τᾷλλα δ' εὐσεβεῖν χρεών ("if one must commit injustice, it is best to do so for the sake of tyranny, being god-fearing in all else," *Phoen.* 524–5); see Cic. *Off.* 3.82 and Suet. *Caes.* 30.5—with Gildenhard (2007) 169, 172.

78 On Jocasta's authority as mother, see Bernstein (2008) 88–94.

79 Recalling the duals used by the Chorus of *Septem* in their lament (e.g., 883–4, 921).

80 See Smolenaars (1994) 213–17. The Euripidean Jocasta expresses an "optimistic rationalism": see Mastronarde (1994) 297–8 and (2010) 218–19.

81 With echoes of Soph. *OT* 1244–50; see Smolenaars (2008) 225–33; cf. Dietrich, pp. 314–19 in this volume.

82 They are the *melior sexus* (7.479): see Lesueur (1992); Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 255–60 and (2008); Bessone (2011) 200–23.

83 See Foley (1985) 106–46, esp. 112, 144; Swift (2009).

the role of Menoeceus, marking a further point of convergence with Euripides: the selfless valor of the young man is juxtaposed with the defective behavior of Eteocles and Polynices, as well as his own father, Creon. Notably, in *Phoenissae*, Menoeceus' self-sacrifice is effected "in complete and extraordinary isolation from the community," there being no indication that the brothers become even aware of it!⁸⁴

Oedipus and the Nexus of Causality

It is significant that the prolonged discussion of the relative importance of supernatural and innate factors in leading the heroes of the *Thebaid* to their doom⁸⁵ elaborates on the relevant debate engendered by *Septem Contra Thebas* as regards the figure of Eteocles. Considering the latter, one may cogently argue that he is not wholly guilty, just as he is not an innocent "self-sacrificing" victim: he commits a crime both willed by destiny and dictated by his own character.⁸⁶ His guilt can be essentially identified with his failure to realize the enormity of fratricide, which renders him unable to even *attempt* to avoid a confrontation with his brother.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, the power of the supernatural factor, the Erinyes, should hardly be downplayed: already in the first part of the play, we may, in fact, sense a fatalism and "uncontrollable emotionality"⁸⁸ emanating from Eteocles' prayers, as well as his stance towards the Chorus (esp. 69–75, 181–202).⁸⁹ In Eteocles' fateful decision at line 653 we may, indeed, sense

84 See Foley (1985) 132–36: 134. On the Euripidean Menoeceus episode, see also Stephanopoulos (1980) 115–23; Aélion (1983) 1.201–3. On its Statian reception, see Vessey (1971b) esp. 243 and (1973) 117–22; Heinrich (1999); Ganiban (2007) 138–44; Papadopoulou (2008) 115–16.

85 For a forceful affirmation of the allegorical character of the Fury, see Lefèvre (2008), after Venini (1964); the role of the Furies as external entities is foregrounded, with varying emphasis, by Schetter (1960) 5–29; Feeney (1991) 378–81; Dominik (1994b) 1–75, esp. 33–48, 54–60, (1994c) 211–13; Hershkowitz (1998) 247–301, esp. 261–2; Criado (1999) and (2000) esp. 153–79. On the idea of "parallel motivation" (or "predisposition" of the individual) insist Ahl (1986) esp. 2851–2; Fantham (1997); Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) esp. 45–69.

86 See esp. Zeitlin (1982) 161–8; von Fritz (1962b). Contrast Podlecki's (1964) exclusive focus on Eteocles' psychology.

87 Lawrence (2007) 347–52.

88 Term used by Seidensticker (2009) 226–8: 227—not tracing its cause to the Erinyes, however.

89 See von Fritz (1962b) esp. 214–18; Winnington-Ingram (1983) 25–40; Stehle (2005). Generally on the Curse in *Septem*, see Geisser (2002) 198–236.

the tragic crux where supernatural influence meets human action.⁹⁰ Contrary to *Septem*, the presence of Oedipus' curse in *Phoenissae*, though proclaimed right at the beginning and repeatedly evoked thereafter (esp. 66–8, 254–5, 333–4, 624), is not equally prominent as a motive: what leads Eteocles to his doom is primarily his tyrannical and egoistic mentality, while Polynices, who appears sympathetic at times, is driven by a thinly veiled yearning for revenge.⁹¹

To return to the *Thebaid*, it is not clear, first of all, *who* began the conflict: indeed, Jupiter's assertion *ueteres seraeque in proelia causae* ("ancient causes are leading, now late in time, to war," 7.198) is not contradicted anywhere.⁹² To be sure, the psychological sketch of Polynices at 1.314–23 follows the onset of the Fury (1.123–30), who imbues the brothers with key passions such as *furor*, *inuidia*, *odium*. Notwithstanding that, we are left to wonder whether Polynices' wish to unseat his brother, his resentment and "fretful hope" (1.322) have deeper roots within his own self; in fact, the narrator discourages us from any easy answer by expressing his *aporia* regarding what motivated Polynices to take the road to Argos: was it the Fury, pure chance, or Fate (1.324–8)?⁹³ Indeed, at specific moments we are afforded glimpses of the peculiar psychology of *both* brothers, which, at times, evinces inner desolation and feelings of anxiety or horror, coupled with hate,⁹⁴ affects that can be attributed to the influence of the Fury. It can scarcely be fortuitous that it is in precisely such contexts that the brothers are designated as *Oedipodionius* (*-ides*), *Labdacius*, or *Echionius* (*-ides*), namely epithets evoking the role of heredity, which entails the function of the curse.⁹⁵ We recall the Aeschylean Eteocles being addressed as Οἰδίπου τέκος ("son of Oedipus," *Sept.* 203, 677) by the Chorus.

Indeed, in the *Thebaid*, everything appears to begin with Oedipus, more precisely with his perverted prayer, ensuing immediately after the proem

90 See Long (1986); Sewell-Rutter (2007) 25–34 (esp. 32), 155–61; also 35–48, 163–6 for a comparative discussion of inherited guilt in *Phoenissae*.

91 Aélion (1983) 1.212–13.

92 See Smolenaars (1994) 102; cf. 2.267–8 and 4.212. "La question de l'origine du conflit remonte à l'infini sans jamais trouver de réponse," to quote Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 64.

93 Cf. esp. 10.831–6 and 12.420–3; with Ahl (1986) 2850–4; Feeney (1991) 349–50; Delarue (2000) 276–80; *contra* Franchet d'Espèrey (2001a), arguing for the poet's leaning towards the last option each time outlined.

94 See Dominik (1994b) 79–88, (1994c) 170–1, 220; Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 47–51.

95 E.g., 1.313 (Polynices) or 4.491 (Eteocles); see Hershkowitz (1998) 277–82; Ripoll (1998b) 325–8; Nagel (1999), centering on 6.296–549. On inherited guilt in the *Thebaid*, see, additionally, Davis (1994); Keith (2002) 384–90; Bernstein (2008) 64–104 (66–85 on the brothers); also Franchet d'Espèrey (2001b)—disinclined, though, to trace the workings of inherited guilt beyond Oedipus.

(1.56–87): a “theatrical” opening, akin to a tragic prologue.⁹⁶ Oedipus—like Jocasta in Euripides’ *Phoenissae*—relates the main points of the story so far, but instead of begging Zeus for a reprieve from the impending disaster (Ζεῦ, σῶσον ἡμᾶς, “O Zeus, save us,” 85), he asks Tisiphone to inspire hate in his sons, in order that they divide their rights of kingship by the sword.⁹⁷ Significantly, in contrast to the tragic tradition, this imprecation neither precedes the story nor follows the outbreak of hostilities.⁹⁸ Further, in contrast with Euripides, the Statian Oedipus’ confinement does not seem to be forced, whereas, alongside the expected reference to the maltreatment inflicted on him by his sons,⁹⁹ he appears to almost equally resent his loss of regal power (*Theb.* 1.74–8): thus, what is foregrounded is his inhumane aspect.¹⁰⁰ Yet, Oedipus, who so eagerly anticipated the *nefas* of fraternal war, eventually laments over his sons but also denies responsibility; instead, he allots a prime role to supernatural factors, while placing his behavior firmly under the sign of *furor* (11.617–21). Although the model is manifestly Euripidean (*Phoen.* 1595–624),¹⁰¹ the Statian scene conveys a heightened pathos, “the climax of the tragedy”.¹⁰² Oedipus’ “metamorphosis,” as it transpires over the dead bodies of his sons, carries greater psychological and narrative potency and succeeds in revealing, at last, his

96 See Reussner (1921) 3. In Oedipus’ account of his life, Statius broadly follows Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*: see Smolenaars (2008) 218–19. We have, in fact, two more “tragic prologues” in the epic, spoken by Pluto (8.34–79) and Tisiphone (11.76–112), respectively; see Bessone (2011) 98–100.

97 As in *Phoen.* 67–68; cf. Soph. *OC* 1348–96; also the *Cyclic Thebaid* (frags 2, 3 Bernabé). On the curse and dream in *Septem*, see Burnett (1973): Eteocles appears to regard the war itself as the realization of the curse, rather than envisaging a duel with his brother; the real meaning of the curse becomes clear only at 653.

98 That is, in contrast to either *Septem* and *Phoenissae* or *Oedipus Coloneus* and Seneca’s *Phoenissae*. See Franchet d’Espèrey (2001b) esp. 194.

99 The reason why Oedipus has cursed his sons is not clear in *Septem*; for various readings of lines 785–90, see Hutchinson (1985) xxv–xxx; Mueller-Goldingen (1985) 21–4; March (1987) 139–54; Lawrence (2007) 336. In *Phoenissae*, Oedipus’ curse is motivated by his misfortune and his confinement in the palace (874–7); see Aélion (1986) 64–6. In *Oedipus Coloneus*, the father’s indignation is rooted in the brothers’ role in his ousting from Thebes and—contrary to *Phoenissae*—the curse follows the outbreak of the conflict; see Mueller-Goldingen (1985) 272–6.

100 See Venini (1961b) 395–6; Ahl (1986) 2825; Ganiban (2007) 27; Dangel (2009) 161–3; more pointedly Vessey (1971a) 377 and (1973) 74–5. The extent of Oedipus’ maltreatment rests principally on the interpretation of 1.238–9; see Ganiban (2007) 26–7.

101 Note especially his denial of responsibility at 1611–14; cf. Mastronarde (1994) 603–4.

102 So Vessey (1973) 280.

human dimension.¹⁰³ What is effectively absent from Euripides' play is any idea of Oedipus' curse having been pronounced in a state of madness, as well as the concomitant emphasis on the mental derangement it embodies as it is enacted. By contrast, for the Aeschylean Chorus, Oedipus is βλαψίφρων ("of warped mind," *Sept.* 725), having uttered his imprecations μαινομένα κραδία ("with maddened heart," 781), while Eteocles' characterization of Oedipus' γένος as θεομανές ("maddened by the divine," 653) intimates a connection between the Erinyes and madness.¹⁰⁴

Statius' indebtedness to both Aeschylus and Euripides regarding the issue of causation begins, now, to emerge. In the Aeschylean model of "double motivation," which ascribes a significant role to the personified Curse, alongside human passions, we may discern a precedent to the complex causality governing the *Thebaid*, whereby mortals are not exonerated, despite the role of supernatural factors in determining their actions. Regarding specifically the brothers, it is, indeed, their *gradual* process of mutual identification—akin to the tragic development of *Septem Contra Thebas*—which renders their final assimilation particularly arresting. At the same time, the Statian model of multiple causation embodies a hermeneutic *aporia*, which also deserves to be read as, effectively, a *comment* on the tremendous hold of passions over humans,¹⁰⁵ who are at least *perceived as* being consciously pursuing destructive and self-destructive ends, in a manner unmistakably evoking Euripides' *Phoenissae*.¹⁰⁶

103 See Venini (1964) 204–5; Dominik (1994b) 45–6, 114–15, (1994c) 134–7; Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 59–62; Aricò (2002) 175–6; Anzinger (2007) 285–7. Of course, this "metamorphosis" will not last long: during his confrontation with Creon, Oedipus shall relapse to *furor*; see Ganiban (2007) 195–9; also Heslin (2008) 112–14 on the Sophoclean echoes.

104 See also *Sept.* 895–8; cf. Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 210–11 (hesitant, though, to draw parallels with Statius).

105 Cf. Burck (1953) esp. 702–6.

106 Cf. Burian (1997) 195–6. May I express my warm thanks to the editors and also to Sophia Georgacopoulou and Sophia Papaioannou for their valuable comments.

Georgics 2.497 and *Thebaid* 1.19–20: Allusion and Inspiration

Victoria E. Pagán

Recent scholarship explores the influence of Vergil on Statius, for example, the ways the *Thebaid* engages with the *Aeneid* generally,¹ more specifically the reformulation of Nisus and Euryalus,² the interplay of the funeral games,³ and the pervasive allusions to female figures such as Creusa.⁴ Heinen shows how select poems of the *Silvae* recast the moral questions about the human need to control nature that are at the heart of the *Georgics*.⁵ The *Georgics* are echoed at the end of the *Thebaid*, in the envoi (*Theb.* 12.810–19) that allegorizes the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (especially the backward glance, *G.* 4.485–91);⁶ however, a hitherto unnoticed allusion to the *Georgics* in the proem suggests that in addition to the epic *Aeneid*, the *Georgics* may also have inspired not only the end but the entire enterprise of the *Thebaid*.

The *Georgics* is a reticent poem that beckons continuators and invites amplification. For instance, in the epyllion, Vergil demurs to compose Orpheus'

1 G. W. Williams (1986) on Statius' anxious imitation of Vergil; with attention to structure, Pollmann (2001) explores the differences and similarities between the two epics; Ganiban (2007) 2 is the first book-length study of the influence of the *Aeneid* to argue that "Statius' *Thebaid* offers a critical reinterpretation of the politics and moral virtues of kingship in the *Aeneid*."

2 Markus (1997) focuses exclusively on the episode. Coffee (2006) traces Vergilian precedent for Statius' use of economic language to express ethical connotations; on Nisus and Euryalus in particular, see pp. 426, 442.

3 Lovatt (2005) examines the relationship of the funeral games in book 6 to the rest of the poem and to funeral games in epic predecessors.

4 In her study of the relationship between Lucan's *De Bello Civili* and the *Thebaid*, Malamud (1995) 25–6 observes the ways that the *Thebaid* is gendered and "takes on a life of her own" by which "Statius appears to be casting his poem as a Creusa or Eurydice." Nugent (1996) takes the Hypsipyle episode as emblematic of the relationship between Statius and Vergil; on Creusa, see Nugent (1996) 70.

5 Heinen (2011) examines *Silv.* 1.1, 1.3, 2.2, 3.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in light of the first two books of the *Georgics*.

6 Pagán (2000) esp. 440.

speech that convinced the rulers of the underworld to allow him entrance. In the words of Anderson, “Vergil prudently avoided the challenge of reproducing the ineffable song by which Orpheus conquered death.”⁷ Ovid, however, could not resist, and in his account of the myth he contrives twenty-three lines of *oratio recta* that insert precisely what Vergil omits (*Met.* 10.17–39).⁸ Likewise in *Georgics* 4, Vergil declines to write about the garden: *uerum haec ipse equidem spatiis exclusus iniquis / praetereo atque aliis post me memoranda relinquo* (“but these topics, I myself, prevented by limited space, pass over and leave for others to recount after me,” *G.* 4.147–8).⁹ Columella takes his cue from these lines and composes 436 hexameters on the garden, his *De Agricultura* 10.¹⁰ I submit that the beatitude of the farmer in the *Georgics* likewise extends an invitation to fulfillment that Statius cannot resist:

felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas
 atque metus omnis et inexorabile fatum
 subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis auari.
 fortunatus et ille deos qui nouit agrestis
 Panaque Siluanumque senem Nymphasque sorores.
 illum non populi fascēs, non purpura regum
 flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres,
 aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab *Histro*,
 non res Romanae perituraque regna; neque ille
 aut doluit miserans inopem aut inuidit habenti.

VERG. *G.* 2.490–9

Blessed is he who has been able to learn the causes of things
 and cast all fears and unyielding fate
 and the howls of greedy Acheron beneath his feet.
 Happy the man who knows the woodland gods
 and Pan and old Silvanus and sister nymphs.

7 Anderson (1972) 475.

8 For Perutelli (1995), Ovid corrects Vergil; for Pagán (2004), he supplements Vergil.

9 Citations of the *Georgics* are from Thomas (1988).

10 ... *ut poeticis numeris explerem Georgici carminis omissas partes, quas tamen et ipse Vergilius significauerat, posteris se memorandas relinquere* (“... so that I might complete, in verse, the omitted parts of the *Georgics* which nevertheless even Vergil himself said he would leave to posterity to recount,” *De Agricultura* 10 *praef.* 3). On references to Vergil throughout Columella’s treatise, see Cossarini (1977); Noè (2002) 163; on *G.* 4.147–8 and *De Agricultura* 10, see Pagán (2006) 30–36.

Him no magistrate's power, nor purple of kings
 ever bends, nor strife rousing treacherous brothers,
 nor Dacian swooping down from his leagued Hister,
 no Roman power nor kingdoms about to perish; he never
 grieves the destitute in pity nor envies one who possesses wealth.

We will have to leave aside the formulation *felix qui potuit* and the perplexing questions it raises about the relationship between the *Georgics* and Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*; rather, the second *makarismos* contains the seeds of Statius' inspiration.¹¹ Vergil denies the power of political wrangling, the turmoil of fraternal *discordia*, and the threat of Dacians to disturb the serenity of his beatific farmer; the knowledgeable man lives free of fear. Rhetorical effect is heightened by the careful arrangement of the six subjects of *flexit* in three pairs distributed over four lines (*fascēs, purpura*, 495; *discordia, Dacus*, 496–7; *res, regna*, 498). Anaphora of *non* and the chiasmus of nominative and genitive binds the first two general subjects, *non populi fascēs, non purpura regum* (495); chiasmus of noun and adjective binds the last two general subjects, *res Romanae perituraque regna* (498). Between these abstract metonyms, the chiasmus is expanded. The enclosure of nominative present participle and noun in *infidos agitans discordia fratres* (496) is repeated in *coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro* (497). This parallel word order casts internal, domestic, civil war as a mirror image of external, foreign conflict on the Hister River¹² and universalizes the farmer's equanimity. From the family hearth to the far reaches of the empire, he remains at peace. Attention to the central pair, *infidos agitans discordia fratres* and especially *coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro*, reveals intertextualities that significantly change our understanding of the relationship of the *Georgics* to the *Thebaid*.

11 See Miles (1980) 154–5; Farrell (1991); Nappa (2005) 105–8 on the difference between the first and second *makarismos*. The first points to predecessors, the second anticipates successors. *Flexit, doluit*, and *inuidit* are “habitual perfects,” Thomas (1988) 255.

12 *Hister, Histri* (also *Ister*) is the Latin name for the lower course of the Danube and the region of the Danube Delta (in modern day Romania) where the river flows into the Black Sea, just north of Tomis. According to Gaertner (2005) 186, *Hister* derives from a Thracian word meaning “mighty”; Latin poets prefer *Hister* to *Danuuius*, perhaps in imitation of Greek usage, where *Istros* “is likely to have been the name predominantly used in the Greek-speaking city of Tomis.”

Dacians

Dacus was the name given to the collective tribes across the Danube that were eventually subdued by Trajan and divided by Hadrian into the three provinces of Upper Dacia, Lower Dacia, and Porolissensis. In the late republic the tribes were united under Burebistas king of Dacia against whom Caesar, on the eve of his assassination, was planning an expedition with his young nephew Octavian (Suet. *Iul.* 44.3, *Aug.* 8.2; Vell. 2.59.4). The region remained a problem for Octavian who devoted two full seasons there (Appian recounts the campaigns in *Illyrian Wars* 16–30), since Dacia was a stepping stone to Parthia and the glory for recovering the standards of Crassus, a glory which Antony actively sought to obtain for himself (in 37 BCE he prepared to take Parthia, but he was forced to retreat in 36).¹³ The death of Burebistas left the region in the hands of lesser rulers. Octavian attempted contact with Cotiso king of the Getae who controlled the area between his recently conquered Dalmatia and Antony's northern borderland of Macedonia;¹⁴ Antony allied with Cotiso's rival Dicomēs (Plut. *Ant.* 63). Octavian's success in the Danube region was celebrated on August 13, 29 BCE. Recited to Octavian on that occasion (according to the *Vita Donati* 25, 27, and *Vita Servii* 25), the *Georgics* perhaps reflects a cautious optimism regarding Dacia; *coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro* would have recalled the long-standing trouble with the Dacians as well as Octavian's more recent successes at controlling the region.¹⁵

13 Plut. *Ant.* 37, 41–51 on Antony's failed Parthian campaign.

14 To discredit Octavian as one who collaborates with barbarian monarchs, Antony spread a rumor that Octavian sought a marriage alliance with Cotiso, offering his daughter Julia to the king in return for the hand of the king's daughter (Suet. *Aug.* 63.2).

15 As he himself describes in the *Res Gestae*: *citra quod Dacorum transgressus exercitus meis auspiciis uictus profligatusque est, et postea trans Danuvium ductus exercitus meus Dacorum gentes imperia populi Romani perferre coegit* ("an army of Dacians that crossed the Danube was defeated and routed under my auspices, and afterwards my army was led across the Danube and drove the tribes of Dacians to submit to the rule of the Roman people," 30.2; text Brunt and Moore [1967]). Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.8.17–18 (*mitte ciuilis super urbe curas: / occidit Daci Cotisonis agmen*, "dismiss cares of state concerning the city: the battle line of Dacian Cotiso has fallen") and Fraenkel (1957) 223: "the convivial poem grows imperceptibly into a *carmen civile* and . . . extols the *pax Augusta*." Strabo 7.3.13 describes the brink of Dacian subjugation: "close to the point of yielding obedience to the Romans, though as yet they are not absolutely submissive." See Syme (1939) 240 on Octavian's success ("His was the glory"); for the date of the *Georgics*, Thomas (1988) 1.

In the proem to the *Thebaid*, Statius states the subject of his epic (1.16–17), followed by topics that he dare not compose and praise of Domitian:¹⁶

limes mihi carminis esto
Oedipodae confusa domus, quando Itala nondum
signa nec Arctos ausim spirare triumphos
bisque iugo Rhenum, bis adactum legibus *Histrum*
et *coniurato* deiectos uertice *Dacos*
aut defensa prius uix pubescentibus annis
bella Iouis. tuque, o Latiae decus addite famae
quem noua maturi subeuntem exorsa parentis
aeternum sibi Roma cupit . . .

THEB. 1.16–24¹⁷

Let the limit of my epic be
the dysfunctional family of Oedipus, since not yet
do I dare give breath to Italian standards and northern triumphs,
Rhine twice subjugated, the Hister twice reduced to the rule of law,
and Dacians hurled down from their leagued mountain,
or wars of Jupiter ward off scarcely before your teenage years.
And you, glory added to Latium's fame,
whom, as you take on your aged father's enterprises anew,
Rome desires as hers for eternity . . .

Statius repeats *Georgics* 2.497 (*aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro*) with minor variations: *et* instead of *aut*; *deiectos* instead of *descendens*; *Dacos* in the accusative instead of the nominative. Statius' synchysis (*coniurato deiectos uertice Dacos*) elegantly recasts Vergil's chiasmus so as to signal and simultaneously outstrip the model. Vergil's *flexit* has six subjects occupying four perfectly balanced lines; Statius' *spirare* has six objects spread across five lines in an ascending tricolon (*signa, triumphos*, 18; *Rhenum, Histrum*, 19; *Dacos, bella*, 20–2). Both poets transfer the epithet *coniurato* from the Dacians who

16 On the proem, see further Myers, pp. 32–41 in this volume; on the proem and *recusatio*, see Ahl (1986) 2817–22 and Dominik (1994b) 167–76, (2003).

17 Vessey (1973) 60–7 outlines the threefold proem (*Theb.* 1.1–17, definition of topic; 17–31, *recusatio* and praise of Domitian; 32–45, program) and denies “any subtle political allegory” (63). Debate centers on the date of composition and the theory that 17–31 is an interpolation; see Ganiban (2007) 45 n. 9. I assume the compositional unity of the prologue.

swore the oath to the place where they swore the oath (“the leagued Hister” and “the leagued mountain”).¹⁸ Vergil includes Dacians in a list of things that do *not* bother his serene farmer. For Statius, Dacians are a subject he will *not* write about. The geographical remoteness of Dacia and the Hister is recapitulated in the rhetorical distance created by the negations (*non* and *nondum*); as the farmer keeps worries of the Dacians at arm’s length, so too Statius eschews them as a topic for his epic. Statius unhinges Vergil’s parallel subjects, discarding the Dacians and electing instead *fraternas acies* (*Theb.* 1.1). Although the river Hister remains at the end of both lines, Statius expands the simple prepositional phrase in chiasmus into an object phrase in synchysis: *bis adactum legibus Histrum*. The anaphora of *bis* contributes to the theme of doubleness that will permeate this epic of Thebes, a city founded by legendary twins Amphion and Zethus. Indeed, the motif of pairs and doubles “resonates throughout the *Thebaid*,” as Braund demonstrates with examples from across the epic.¹⁹

The definition of the parameters of the *Thebaid* (the dysfunctional family of Oedipus) is followed by a *recusatio* that distinguishes mythology from history, crowned by an apostrophe to Domitian, who in keeping the policy of his father, Vespasian, strengthened defenses on the Danube (Statius omits the reign of Titus,²⁰ whether because it was too short and therefore insignificant or because he wished to avoid Domitian’s rival sibling, we cannot say).²¹ In late 84 or early 85 the Dacians crossed the Danube, invaded the Roman province Moesia, and killed the governor Oppius Sabinus.²² With his praetorian prefect Cornelius Fuscus, Domitian intervened to restore order. His success in forcing

18 Cf. Serv. ad G. 2.497: *hunc morem esse Dacorum, ut cum ad bella proficiscerentur, non prius rem capesserent, quam de Histro certum modum haurientes ore in modum sacri uini, iurarent, non se ad patriae sedes regressuros nisi hostibus caesis; et idcirco Vergilium familiari sibi hypallage usum dixisse Histrum coniuratum, apud quem Daci coniurare consueverunt* (“The Dacians had a custom whereby when they set out for wars, they did not take up the campaign until they drank a sure measure from the Hister and swore an oath as if sealed with wine that they would not return to their homeland unless the enemy was slaughtered. So Vergil was familiar with this and used hypallage ‘leagued Hister’ at which the Dacians were accustomed to swear the common oath.”).

19 Braund (2006) 270: farmer yoking two bulls, 1.131–38; Bacchante sees two brothers as two bulls, 4.397–400; two tigers of Bacchus, 7.564–607; simile of two torrents, 8.462–65; simile of two boars, 11.524–38; twin flames, 12.429–32.

20 Shackleton Bailey (2003) 1.43 n. 7.

21 Dominik (1994b) 138–9 on “rumours of an alleged split.”

22 Jones (1992) 138, with n. 77 on the controversies surrounding the date of Oppius Sabinus’ defeat.

the Dacians back across the Danube earned him two triumphs in Rome;²³ hence the adverb *bis* at line 19 is reasonable. However, the repetition of *bis* also suggests failure, since a successful general need only subjugate once.²⁴ The next year, Fuscus attempted to invade Dacia, rashly according to Tacitus (Tac. *Agr.* 41.2).²⁵ Upon the death of Fuscus, Domitian returned to the Danube (Suet. *Dom.* 6.1) where he positioned legions and appointed Tettius Julianus, who defeated the Dacians in 88. When Statius speaks of Domitian's campaigns on the Danube, he uses language that is distinctively Vergilian. The adverb *non-dum* ("not yet," 1.17) suggests that Statius may at some point in the future take up the topic of Italian standards and northern triumphs; following Dietrich, we may compare "Virgil's statement in the third book of the *Georgics* that he will cover Augustus' accomplishments at a later time."²⁶ As Vergil postpones writing a poem of Augustus' achievements, so Statius procrastinates; however, the unmistakable verbal correspondences demand closer inspection of the civil war context of *Georgics* 2.497 and the subsequent intertextuality that leads to its incorporation in *Thebaid* 1.19–20.

Infidos agitans discordia fratres (G. 2.496) is the first of three references to civil strife at the end of *Georgics* 2. The second occurs in the ensuing priamel of political life in 503–10: Vergil presents the unscrupulous occupations of others who sail, make war, or plead in court; in amassing great fortunes they do not hesitate to "rejoice, steeped in the blood of their brothers" (*gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum*, 510). Third, the *agricola* (513) eschews all the trappings of politics in favor of a simple life that results in a peaceful home, complete with food, wine, children, friends, and leisure—all reminiscent of an ancient time:

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- 23 In 83 over the Chatti and in 86 over the Dacians: *post autem duos triumphos* ("after two triumphs," Suet. *Dom.* 13.3). In 89 over the Chatti and Dacians together: *de Chattis Dacisque post uaria proelia duplicem triumphum egit* ("after battles of various success he celebrated a double triumph over the Chatti and the Dacians," *Dom.* 6.1). See Jones (1996) 58, 114.
- 24 The debate over the degree of criticism and subversion registered in the epic is less interesting to me than the influence of the *Georgics*, since the former cannot be proven conclusively, while the latter, I hope, can.
- 25 For a general account of the campaigns, see Dio Cass. 67.6–7.
- 26 Dietrich (1999) 42; G. 3.46–8: *mox tamen ardentis accingar dicere pugnas / Caesaris et nomen fama tot ferre per annos, / Tithoni prima quot abest ab origine Caesar* ("soon I shall gird myself to sing of raging battles and to bear his name in story through as many years as Caesar is distant from the far-off birth of Tithonus"). For Thomas (1985) 68, this passage stands between "the rejection of kings and battles in *Eclogue* 6 and the commitment to them in *Aeneid* 7."

hanc olim ueteres uitam coluere Sabini,
 hanc Remus et frater; sic fortis Etruria creuit
 scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma,
 septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces.

VERG. G. 2.532–5

Once the ancient Sabines used to live this life,
 Remus and his brother too; thus surely Etruria grew strong
 and Rome became the fairest of all,
 and as one she surrounded her seven fortresses with a wall.

In his seminal commentary, Thomas calls *Remus et frater* “a somewhat surprising reference” and finds it “odd that [Vergil] should choose to stress the relationship, paradigmatic of civil strife.”²⁷ Yet for Braund, “what Thebes offers above all is a chance to ponder origins-in-fratricide, by aligning the story of the conflict between Romulus and Remus with Theban fraternal conflict”²⁸ Therefore, Statius takes this very oddity of fraternal bloodshed as the starting point for the *Thebaid*: *fraternas acies* (1.1) materializes the theme of civil war that is merely adumbrated at the end of *Georgics* 2.

The Hister

The most obvious point of contact between *Georgics* 2.497 and *Thebaid* 1.19–20 is the Hister River. In the ultimate poem of civil war in extant Latin literature, Lucan refers to the Hister three times, two of which are especially curious.²⁹ Dismayed at the outbreak of civil war, Romans pray not for peace but for foreign wars of any sort to distract them from drawing each other’s blood: *omnibus hostes / reddite nos populis: ciuile aduertite bellum* (“make us enemies of every nation but ward off civil war,” Luc. 2.52–3). According to Fantham, the

27 Thomas (1988) 262. Puhvel (1975) 151 admits that *Remus et frater* may be *metri causa*; cf. *Silvae* 2.7.60, *culminibus Remi*, which Newlands (2011b) 238 compares, “with its poignant suggestion that even in the ‘good old days’ the seeds of contemporary civic discord were sown.” Nelis (2004) demonstrates how this passage participates in the tradition of Empedoclean concord and discord that suffuses the end of *Georgics* 2.

28 Braund (2006) 267; on the twinship theme and the Roman historicization of the Indo-European creation myth, see Puhvel (1975).

29 The third occurs at Luc. 2.418–20; the disposition of Pompey’s forces (2.392–438) occasions a digression on geography in which Lucan compares the might of the Po to the Nile and the Hister; Horace collocates these two rivers at *Carm.* 4.14.46.

prayer is composed of tropes found in Augustan poetry, especially the enumeration of remote enemies to define the limits of empire, usually selected to cover the points of the compass. Among foreign enemies listed by Lucan are Massagetae who can cross the Hister: *Massageten Scythicus non adliget Hister* ("let the Scythian Hister fail to bar the Massagetae," 2.50), for which Fantham, in passing, lists *Georgics* 2.497 as a comparandum.³⁰ In the *Georgics*, the Hister has negative connotations because the Dacians who dwell there have the capacity to upset the peaceful farmer (in a context that is heavily weighted with tones of civil war). Yet in typical anti-Vergilian fashion, at *De Bello Civili* 2.50 the Hister has positive connotations because it generates foreign, not civil war; the Dacians who dwell there have the capacity to avert civil war and restore peace to Rome.

Lucan's other significant reference to the Hister occurs in a simile in book 5. When Caesar attempts to cross the Adriatic, the wind dies and the sea lies motionless:

sic stat iners Scythicas astringens Bosporos undas,
cum glacie retinente fretum non impulit Hister,
immensumque gelu tegitur mare.

LUC. 5.436–8

Just so the Bosphorus stands sluggish gripping Scythian waves
when the Hister with clinging ice does not flow forth to the deep,
and the vast sea is covered in frost.

Like the frozen river, so Caesar's crossing is stalled as the epic itself grinds to a halt; at work is the poetics of delay, identified by Masters as the hallmark of the *De Bello Civili*.³¹

Lucan's imitation of the *Georgics* is well-documented, especially his engagement with *Georgics* 1. His descriptions of civil war derive in part from *Georgics* 1.489–514; his praise of Nero (1.33–66) "is explicitly modelled upon the praise of Octavian at *G.* 1.24–42,"³² and his prodigies of civil war (1.522–83) are adapted from portents of Caesar's death (*G.* 1.464–88).³³ Therefore, Lucan's attention

30 Fantham (1992) 87.

31 Masters (1992) 3: "Lucan's account sets up a series of narrative devices that obstruct Caesar's progress." On the Nemean episode as a narrative delay in the *Thebaid*, see McNelis (2007) 76–96.

32 Roche (2009b) 23.

33 Roche (2009b) 21–4; see also the remarks of Casali (2011) 85–6, 92.

to the Hister River (and Fantham's passing notice of an allusion to *G.* 2.497) can be seen as part of a more sustained engagement with the *Georgics*.³⁴ Once again the *Georgics* emerge as a source of inspiration as powerful and influential as the *Aeneid*, if not more. As Lucan draws on *Georgics* 1 at the beginning of the *De Bello Civili*, so it would appear that Statius, following in due course, draws on *Georgics* 2 at the beginning of the *Thebaid*.³⁵

Lucan's image of the frozen Hister derives in part from the only other mention of the river in the *Georgics* (3.350), in the ethnography of Scythia, where it is "always winter" (*semper hiems*, 3.356); however, the image is developed most fully by Ovid in his exile poetry. The Hister freezes in winter and thaws in spring so that the herdsman can no longer drive his cattle across the ice—a conceit which is also found in the *Georgics*.³⁶ The frozen Hister symbolizes not only the remoteness but the monotony and seeming endlessness of Ovid's exile: *ut sumus in Ponto, ter frigore constitit Hister, / facta est Euxini dura ter unda maris* ("since I arrived in Pontus, three times the Hister has stood still due to the cold, three times the wave of the Euxine sea has grown hard," *Tr.* 5.10.1–2). When the Hister freezes, it becomes a sort of bridge, a *Pontus*, as it were, at which time stands still. So at *De Bello Civili* 5.437, Lucan's simile activates this Ovidian imagery of motionless inertia.

As the epitome of remote and barbarian landscapes, the Hister readily lends itself to *adynata*, or expressions of complete impossibility.³⁷ Ovid lives too close to the Hister (*nimum nobis conterminus Hister, Pont.* 4.6.45) and the strange lands and woeful encounters of Odysseus are nothing compared to Ovid's

34 In addition to the influence on the beginning of Lucan's poem, Paratore (1943) demonstrates the influence of the beatific farmer (*G.* 2.490–502) and the old man of Tarentum (4.125–46) on Lucan's conception of *otium* in the Amyclas episode (5.515–76). Malamud (2009) 295–8 shows that Lucan's description of Amyclas' Libyan dwelling draws on Vergil's ethnographic digression on Libya at *G.* 3.339–48. Surely portions of Lucan's digression on snakes in Africa (9.700–838) derive in part from *G.* 3.414–39.

35 On Statius' debts to Lucan, see Malamud (1995) and Roche, 393–407 in this volume.

36 *Undaque iam tergo ferratos sustinet orbis, / puppibus illa prius, patulis nunc hospita plaustris* ("and now the wave bears iron wheels on its back, giving welcome once to ships, now to broad wagons," *G.* 3.361–2); *nec, ut ante, per Histrum / stridula Sauromates plaustra bubulcus agit* ("nor as before does the Sarmatian herdsman drive his creaking wagon across the Hister," *Ov. Tr.* 3.12.29–30). Images of the frozen Hister: *Tr.* 3.10.29–30; *Pont.* 1.2.79, 3.3.26; *Ib.* 136. Cf. Sen. *Phaed.* 58–9.

37 *Et prius hic nimum nobis conterminus Hister / in caput Euxino de mare uertet iter* ("sooner shall the Hister all too near to me turn his course from the Euxine Sea to its source," *Pont.* 4.6.45–6). Cf. Sen. *Her. O.* 514–15: *immixti licet / Ganges et Hister uallibus iunctis eant* ("though the Ganges and Hister are mixed in joined river beds").

terrible life (*Pont.* 4.10.21–2). Above all, the river becomes symbolic of Ovid's exile experience and is assimilated to his identity as a poet: *sed gloriior Histrum / ingenio nullum maius habere meo* ("yet I boast that the Hister has no greater talent than mine," *Pont.* 1.5.63–4). The Hister is Ovid's return address, as it were: "the letter you read comes to you from that land where the broad Hister adds water to the sea" (*quam legis, ex illa tibi uenit epistula terra, / latus ubi aequoreis additur Hister aquis*, *Tr.* 5.7.1–2).³⁸ The Hister becomes synonymous with the exiled, so that references in Lucan and Statius trigger the identification of the river with the poet (rather as "Liverpool" is metonymy for the Beatles).

However, of all the mentions of the Hister River in Ovid's exile poetry, the first is the most politically charged. At the end of the first half of *Tristia* 2, the poem addressed to Augustus, Ovid prays:

unde precor supplex ut nos in tuta releges,
 ne sit cum patria pax quoque adempta mihi,
 ne timeam gentes, quas non bene summouet Hister,
 neue tuus possim ciuis ab hoste capi.
 fas prohibet Latio quemquam de sanguine natum
 Caesaribus saluis barbara uincla pati.

OV. *TR.* 2.1.201–6³⁹

And so I offer a suppliant's prayer that you banish me to a safe place,
 that together with my fatherland peace may not be taken from me,
 that I not fear tribes which the Hister does not keep well in check,
 that I your citizen not suffer to be captured by an enemy.
 Right prohibits anyone born of Latin blood
 to suffer barbarian chains while Caesars live.

Ovid prays for the same peace of mind granted to Vergil's beatific farmer who likewise does not fear the Dacians swooping down from leagued Hister. As we saw in Lucan the Hister cannot bar the Massagetae, so in Ovid it cannot con-

38 Similarly, *Pont.* 3.5.1–2: *quam legis, unde tibi mittatur epistula, quaeris? / hinc, ubi caeruleis iungitur Hister aquis* ("You ask, whence this letter you read was sent to you? From here where the Hister flows with blue waters"). Cf. 3.4.91 (*qui sum summotus ad Histrum*, "I who am removed to the Hister"), 4.2.37–8 (*hic mea cui recitem nisi flauis scripta Corallis / quasque alias gentes barbarus Hister habet?*, "here to whom would I recite my poetry but to the blonde Coralli, and the other races that the wild Hister contains?").

39 For an overview of the politics of *Tristia* 2, see Nugent (1990); on the two distinct halves of the poem, Nugent (1990) 243.

tain the tribes. The river forms a boundary between war and peace, barbarian and Roman, even fiction and reality, if we follow Hardie.⁴⁰ By activating such associations from the *Tristia* and the *De Bello Civili* Statius can magnify the deeds of Domitian, who conquers the Hister not once, but twice (*bis adactum legibus Histrum*, *Theb.* 1.19). Strong affinities bind the imagery of the Hister in the poetry of Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan, which Statius inherits and capitalizes on in the proem—the only time he invokes the river in the *Thebaid*.

Yet even before Vergil, war on the Hister River had a place in Latin poetry. According to Skutsch, the Istrian war of 178–177 BCE “is the only subject matter clearly identifiable” in Ennius, *Annales* 16.⁴¹ Courtney collects seven fragments of a republican epic *Bellum Histricum* by the poet Hostius, who must have commemorated not the war of 178–177 (for that would have competed with Ennius) but rather the victory of Sempronius Tuditanus over the Iapydes and his triumph in 129.⁴² Yet when Hostius asks for one hundred tongues to sing his epic (*non si mihi linguae / centum atque ora sient totidem uocesque liquatae*, “not if I had a hundred tongues and mouths and the same number of clear voices,” frag. 3 Courtney), he multiplies Ennius’ request by a factor of ten (*non si lingua loqui saperet quibus, ora decem sint / in me, tum ferro cor sit pectusque reuinctum*, “not if I had ten mouths which my tongue had sense to speak and a heart and chest encased in iron,” 469–70 Skutsch). Macrobius explicitly traces the genealogy of the “many mouths” *topos* from Homer’s catalogue of ships (*Il.* 2.488–90) to Hostius to Vergil at *Georgics* 2.43–4: *non mihi si linguae centum sint oraque centum / ferrea uox* (“not though I had a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths, a voice of iron,” repeated verbatim at *Aen.* 6.625–6).⁴³ Could it be that Vergil’s *coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro* also allows us to glimpse something of the lost *Bellum Histricum*?⁴⁴ The alliteration of “p” in Hostius, fragment 1 is “striking,” according to Courtney (*percutit atque*

40 In his analysis of David Malouf’s reception of the *Metamorphoses* in the novel *An Imaginary Life*, in which the characters cross the Ister River at the end, Hardie (2002) 328 speaks of “the physical barrier of water” as “the boundary between fiction and reality.”

41 Skutsch (1985) 564.

42 Courtney (1993) 52–5. For an assessment of Hostius’ archaizing style, see Vinchesi (1984) esp. 57–9; on Sempronius, see Becker (2008) 84. The *Bellum Histricum* was one of only three original epics produced in the century after Ennius: Dickson (1935) 278.

43 On the cliché in Vergil, see Gowers (2005), who notes the inconsistency with *Aen.* 6.42–4, where the Sibyl is described as having a hundred mouths.

44 *Macrob. Sat.* 6.3.6; Vinchesi (1984) 46–8; Courtney (1993) 53; Casali (2006) 593. Hinds (1998) 38–9 describes how *Aen.* 6.625–6 is normally seen as echoing Homer, *G.* 2.43–4 as echoing Lucretius, and in both cases, Hostius is negligible (“fade[s] into the background,” Hinds [1998] 38). However, I believe there is more of Hostius here than meets the eye,

hastam pilans prae pondere frangit);⁴⁵ likewise the alliteration of *descendens Dacus* is noteworthy. Perhaps then the unusual hypallage (“leagued Hister”) derives from the republican poet as well? If so, then Statius’ *coniurato deiectos uertice Dacos* imports a complex of allusion that can be traced through Vergil to Hostius and as far back as Ennius.

Conclusion

When Statius refuses to write of Domitian’s Dacian war on the Hister, he also rejects—for the moment—historical epic (and its practitioners, Ennius and Hostius). Judging from the *Silvae*, Statius does write poems (presumably hexameter) on Domitian’s military exploits: *cum modo Germanas acies, modo Dacca sonantem / proelia Palladio tua me manus induit auro* (“when your hand bestowed Palladian gold upon me for singing of German campaigns, Dacian wars,” *Silv.* 4.2.66–7). While nothing survives of the poem on the Dacian wars promised in *Thebaid* 1.32–3, the scholia of Juvenal preserves four lines of the *Bellum Germanicum*,⁴⁶ a poem Griffith judges to have been “quickly tossed-off...shelved...and never completed,”⁴⁷ perhaps because Domitian, worried by Agricola’s success, “was conscious that his recent, fake triumph over Germania was a laughingstock,” as Tacitus tells us (*inerat conscientia derisui fuisse nuper falsum e Germania triumphum*, *Agr.* 39.1).

Before Vergil, Ennius and Hostius had treated historical campaigns on the Hister; after Vergil, Ovid and Lucan fashion the Hister as a symbol of remoteness and inertia. Statius of necessity imports all of these historical and poetic contexts when he imitates *Georgics* 2.497 at *Thebaid* 1.19–20. However, given the almost identical diction and the complementary word order, Statius’ engagement with Vergil tells us something more.

In his discussion (part reverie, part *apologia*) of the old man of Tarentum (*G.* 4.116–46, in many ways a counterpart to the *felix qui potuit* of *G.* 2.490), W.R. Johnson ponders the unanswerable question of why Vergil wrote that particular passage at all and concludes:

for he is also evident at *Theb.* 12.797: *non ego, centena si quis mea pectora laxet / voce deus* (“I could not, if some god unleashed in my breast a hundredfold voice...”).

45 Courtney (1993) 52.

46 Braund (1996b) 243, 251, 271–2.

47 Griffith (1969) 138; for Townend (1973) 159–60, Juvenal’s parody of Statius was unsuccessful and symptomatic of his overall failure.

The core of this passage (and of this poem?) is frightened by and wants an alternative to world-historical events and what they produce. It wants a refuge from history, from its grandeurs and its nightmares.⁴⁸

As always with Johnson, I am convinced, and I believe such sensitivity to the core of the *Georgics* can help shed light on the allusion, by now unequivocally substantiated, to *Georgics* 2.497 at *Thebaid* 1.19–20. For the core of the *Georgics* is a retreat from violence and its ugliness, while the essence of the *Thebaid* is precisely to give voice to violence and suffering, sometimes in the most graphic of terms. Indeed, the perfection of the *Georgics* (“it skirts as close to perfection as verse can come”⁴⁹) derives in part from its distilled *recusatio* to represent history, its grandeurs, and nightmares.⁵⁰ Yet it is probably not political office, or dictatorship, or invading Dacians, or even civil war that frightens the poet-farmer but those unnamed (yet very real) fears that lurk on the doorstep, namely the potential to be driven off one’s land, to lose one’s home, or to be sent into exile, and while Vergil probably never envisaged such a fate for himself, exile among the Dacians would be Ovid’s worst nightmare come true.⁵¹ At the same time, however, the perfection of the *Georgics* also lies in its *imperfection*, not only because Vergil introduces topics that he leaves “unfinished” in the sense of the Latin *imperfectus*, but more significantly in its stark portrayal of the imperfection of the human condition. Therefore, in declining to write one poem, Statius instead writes another that completes the deliberate “imperfection” of the *Georgics* and, for my money, this is as powerful as any influence the *Aeneid* exerts on the poem.⁵² Then, when finished with the *Thebaid*, Statius returns to *Georgics* 2 (the book of trees) and reconstitutes it altogether: in his *Silvae*, raw material and poetic genius are grafted to produce a new type of “Woods.”⁵³

48 Johnson (2004) 82.

49 Johnson (2004) 78.

50 For Thomas (1985) 68, Vergil’s *recusatio* at 3.46–8 is an “exquisitely intermediate stage.”

51 I am grateful to Andrew Roth for this observation.

52 G. W. Williams (1986) 217 also recognized “Vergil’s ‘negative capability’ that made him so resourceful a model to his successors”; however, this negative capability is inherent in the *Georgics* as well as the *Aeneid*, and it is less a source of “explicit anxiety in [Statius’] imitation” (Williams [1986] 223) as it is a source of implicit inspiration.

53 Wray (2007) demonstrates that the (long-debated) meaning of the title *Silvae* signals Statius’ *ingenium*, poetic genius. Newlands (2011b) 6–7 attributes the title to the “programmatic use of the word *silvae* in the *Eclogues*”; as the *Aeneid* influences the *Thebaid* so the *Eclogues* influence the *Silvae*. Yet as I hope to have shown, the *Georgics* influence both. If we had Lucan’s *Silvae*, we might see further connections to the *Georgics*.

Vergil denies the power of fraternal *discordia* and leagued Dacians to bend (*non . . . flexit*, *G.* 2.495–6) the equanimity of his beatific farmer. Statius writes an entire epic about the former (civil war) but—for the moment—scrupulously avoids the latter (Domitian’s war with the Dacians). Statius commits to paper the very subject that Vergil declines, and in so doing he forces the reclusive *Georgics* to face history; for although the *Thebaid* is a mythological epic, its depiction of the abuse of power can be applied to contemporary politics.⁵⁴ Perhaps no other poem in the Latin language achieves such a level of balance and harmony as the *Georgics*, and perhaps no other poem so eloquently exposes the enemies of order and virtue that exist in the world. For this reason then, perhaps no other poem exerts so strong a force on the post-Augustan writers, who “remind us that great virtues can degenerate greatly” and that the worst enemies lie within ourselves.⁵⁵ But my sense is that while post-Augustan poets also expose the enemies of order and virtue that exist in the world and within us, their eloquence is of a more fundamental sort. When Ovid and Columella and Lucan—and Statius—pronounce the deliberate silences of the *Georgics*, they prove that the risk of such outspokenness (such *e-loquence*) is worth taking and that the success or failure of a *recusatio* is less important than the refusal to be limited by a bygone aesthetic.

54 Such is the thesis especially of Dominik (1994b) 130–80.

55 Johnson (1970) 151. In defense of Ovid, Johnson identifies a “counter-classical” sensibility characterized by disharmony, weakness, and limitation, as opposed to the order of traditionally “classical” poetry. For their criticism and suggestions, I am grateful to Shane Black, Martha Malamud, Andrew Roth, Andrew Wolpert, and the participants of the Statius International Conference held at the University of Santiago de Compostela, June 2013.

Statius and Senecan Drama

Antony Augoustakis

The relationship between Statian epic and Senecan tragedy has been the object of occasional critical scrutiny in the past decades, since the resurgence of interest in Senecan tragedy, in combination with the most recent renewed interest in Flavian epic poetry.¹ Given the prominence of the misfortunes of the Theban royal family in Seneca's tragic corpus, in plays such as *Oedipus* and *Phoenissae* in particular, it comes as no surprise that the Flavian poet borrows extensively from his Neronian predecessor and builds an intertextual nexus of correspondences that ultimately go beyond the surface of verbal allusions. This study will elaborate on the adaptation and exploitation by Statius of Senecan ritual representations: the Flavian poet extensively draws on such descriptions from Seneca's tragedies and adjusts them in a much more grotesque and exaggerated manner in the *Thebaid*. In what follows, we shall look at scenes such as the necromancy in *Thebaid* 4 and its relationship with similar scenes in *Oedipus*, as well as Tydeus' cannibalism in *Thebaid* 8 and its allusions to *Thyestes*. Just as Seneca grafts the tragic genre with epic overtones, and, as Schiesaro has pointed out,² makes the two genres project a troubling shadow onto each other, so Statius exploits the interaction between the two genres to underscore the inescapability from the *nefas* that overshadows the *Thebaid*'s perverted epic landscape; his chief mechanisms are religious, ritual

1 Studies have heretofore limited themselves to detecting the verbal allusions to Senecan tragedy in Statius' *Thebaid*. The groundwork was laid by Braun (1867). Already Helm (1892) 35 recognized the neglected *status quaestionis*: "in materia quam finxit saepius Statius uideatur secutus esse [sc. Senecam], etiamsi uerba alterius non itam cum altero conspirent, quia ille senarios iambicos, hic uersus epicos scripsit. Qua de similitudine qui adhuc dixere, uocabula quaedam et satis neglegenter aut obiter congesserunt." Helm spends more than twenty pages identifying further verbal similarities (35–58). Following in Helm's footsteps, Legras (1905a) 56–7, 96–8, 174–6 adds further insights on the verbal allusions to Seneca's tragedies. Venini (1965b) and (1967), and most recently, Fantham (1997); Bessone (2006); Ganiban (2007) 159–65; and Sacerdoti (2012) 141–3 have discussed the background of this literary affiliation. *Personae dramatis* frequently discussed are Oedipus and Jocasta or the Furies; see, e.g., Iglesias Montiel and Álvarez Morán (1997) on Jocasta, and Criado (1999) on Tisiphone.

2 Schiesaro (2003) 250.

representations. Statius plays with the idea of tragic *katharsis* at the end of his poem, but at the same time reverses expectations by excluding the possibility of a clear-cut, cleansing resolution: the burial of the dead is accompanied by lamentation, setting the expectations for more violence to ensue with the Epigonoï, the next generation; the conclusion of this war is soon to be overturned by the next battle, in an endless series of civil strife. The poet then opts for a closure that underscores his poetic powerlessness in front of this impasse, when he decides to end his *Thebaid* in the footsteps of the epic tradition of lament, as exemplified in *Iliad* 24, and not in the tragic manner of *katharsis*. Thus what emerges at the end of the *Thebaid* is a mingling of genres, from epic to tragedy, but ultimately epic poetry is privileged.

Necromancy at Thebes

In the middle of *Thebaid* 4, at the end of the catalogue of the Argive heroes setting out to attack Thebes, Statius embarks upon a lengthy narrative recording the reaction of the Thebans to the news of an imminent Argive expedition (4.345–645). Here the narrator reveals the extent of the Theban predicament: they lack the preparations to face the enemy, since their “walls have crumbled with ancient neglect” (*ipsa uetusto / moenia lapsa situ*, 356–7). In addition to portents of upcoming disaster (374–7), the queen of the Bacchants, a prominent figure of the religious life of the Theban society, runs down from Mt. Cithaeron and utters a clear prophecy: two kindred bulls will fight and kill one another (383–404). Upon consultation with Tiresias, Eteocles subjects himself to the prophet’s suggestion of a necromancy after purification:³

ille deos non larga caede iuuen-
 cum,
 non alacri penna aut uerum salientibus extis,
 nec tripode implicito numerisque sequentibus astra,
 turea nec supra uolitante altaria fumo
 tam penitus, durae quam Mortis limite manes
 elicitos, patuisse refert; Lethaeaeque sacra
 et mersum Ismeni subter confinia ponto
 miscentis parat ante ducem, circumque bidentum
 uisceribus laceris et odori sulphuris aura
 graminibusque nouis et longo murmure purgat.

THEB. 4.409–18

3 On the necromancy, see Vessey (1973) 235–58.

He says that the gods do not reveal themselves as clearly by generous slaughter of steers or swift wings of birds or entrails leaping to disclose the truth or by the riddles of a tripod or numbers that follow the stars, nor yet by smoke flying over incense-bearing altars, as do souls of the dead summoned from the threshold of harsh Death. He prepares the rites of Lethe and immerses the ruler under the waters of Ismenos where the river mixes with the sea, and he purifies the whole place with cut-up entrails of sheep and odorous breath of sulphur and fresh herbs and long incantations.

As it has long been recognized, Statius exploits and blends here the second and third acts of Seneca's *Oedipus* to create his own extensive necromancy.⁴ As Vessey aptly notes, all Flavian poets add a *nekyia* episode to their epic narrative, and Statius follows in the footsteps of his Greco-Roman epic predecessors, from Homer to Lucan.⁵ In the second act of *Oedipus*, the poet invents a scene that owes little to the Greek tragic models. As Oedipus looks on, Tiresias (aided by Manto) performs a tripartite ritual: first, he examines the flame, wine, and smoke, then the sacrifice of animals follows, and finally, Manto scrutinizes the entrails in the Roman custom of the *extispicium* (*Oed.* 291–402).⁶ After these methods prove ineffective in revealing the author of Laius' murder (i.e., the objective of the ritual in the first place), at the very end of the scene Tiresias orders the use of necromancy instead, that is, the summoning of Laius' own *umbra* (*ipse euocandus noctis aeternae plagis*, "he himself must be summoned from the regions of eternal night," 393).⁷

4 Similarities had already been observed by Braun (1867); Eissfeldt (1904); Legras (1905a) 56–7, 174–6 (in addition to Lucan's Erichtho scene in *De Bello Civili* 6); and Fiehn (1917) 73–4. Taisne (1991) offers the most recent detailed discussion of the parallels between the two poets, while Boyle (2011) xc–xcii elaborates on some of the same *loci communes* (cf. Boyle also for an account of the influence of the play on the *Thebaid* in general). Parkes (2012) 214–15 points out that "the intertextuality stress[es] the accursed cyclical nature of Theban history."

5 For the details of the reception of the Homeric *nekyia* by Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan, see Vessey (1973) 238–43.

6 See Boyle (2011) 186–8. Pratt (1983) 98 notes that "the originality of the divination scene cannot be known in detail because our information is inadequate, but clearly the scene ingeniously combines divinatory lore and the dramatic material." Citations of Seneca's tragedies from Zwierlein (1986).

7 Vessey (1973) 252: "Statius no doubt wished his readers to remember the drama, and the predictions of the war of the Seven which were contained in it. History has repeated itself; Tiresias is again forced to evoke the dead after failure of other arts. Laius is again to be consulted, as he was before Oedipus' sin was revealed. To offer guidance to the family of Oedipus, Tiresias must turn from heaven to hell."

In a masterful rewriting of Seneca's second act, Statius' Tiresias is quick to reject the first steps which his literary self had already undertaken in Seneca's play: in the *Thebaid*, by means of a tetracolon of negative conjunctions and particles, Tiresias immediately opts for the route of the *manes elicitos* (*non larga caede iuuenicum*, / *non alacri penna* ... / *nec tripode implicito* ... / *turea nec supra uolitante altaria fumo*, *Theb.* 4.409–12). What in Seneca becomes the last recourse that leads to the frightful revelation of Oedipus' guilt, in Statius is underscored as the only choice from the very beginning; everything else is rejected as futile.⁸ Whereas the Senecan prophet becomes frustrated with the non-responsiveness of the methods consulted (*nec alta caeli quae leui pinna secant* / *nec fibra uiuis rapta pectoribus potest* / *ciere nomen*, "neither birds that cut through the heights of the sky on light wings, nor organs snatched from living chests, can summon the name," *Oed.* 390–2), the Statian *uates* is confident of his choice and puts it into practice immediately. Statius' Tiresias is a well-informed reader of the Senecan tragedy after all. He knows that the specific ritual tried in Seneca's play would be employed to no avail; hence he will try the necromancy immediately.

Statius then goes a step further to include a purificatory rite for the king himself: Eteocles is cleansed (*purgat*, *Theb.* 4.418).⁹ Eteocles' immersion "under the waters of Ismenos" (415) intensifies the tragic and flawed dimension of the protagonist's character. As Dee observes, "the very strangeness and marginalization of the ritual itself may suggest that it was performed in vain. For it is abundantly clear that the ritual has no meaningful or lasting effect. Eteocles remains a *rex impius* (11.499), and therefore not purified." If Tiresias' aim is to be as effective as possible and avoid the futile acts performed in Seneca's plays, then this purificatory ritual will also be to no avail. Like Oedipus, Eteocles bears a weighty curse, impossible to shake off his shoulders.¹⁰

In the necromancy itself, Statius exploits Seneca's third act, where Creon recounts the details of Tiresias' ritual to an inquisitive Oedipus. The *ekphrasis* of a netherworld landscape filled with deadly cypresses and distinguished by utter decay (*Oed.* 530–47) is consonant with Statius' *descriptio* of Diana's

8 Boyle (2011) 203 claims that at *Oed.* 390–2 and *Theb.* 4.409–14 Statius' Tiresias "articulates similar sentiments and then proceeds to raise the Ghost of Laius."

9 Vessey (1973) 252 does not pay attention to this purificatory ritual. The verb is used four more times in the poem (5.137, 8.766, 9.574, 12.416); Dee (2013) provides a good discussion of the context of all these occurrences and points out the ultimate futility of the effects of purification in the *Thebaid*.

10 Parkes (2013) 174 observes that the "conspicuous rejection of the option of katabasis befits the poem's exploration of boundaries. Whilst Statius draws attention to the permeability of the borders between his different worlds, the actual participants of the Argive-Theban war appear unable to pass successfully between these boundaries."

grove and its neighboring field of Mars (*Theb.* 4.419–42). In Statius, however, the grove is distinctly free of corruption and decay: the trees are evergreen with leaves, never shorn, nor diminished by the winters (420–1).¹¹ In Seneca, among other trees, the cypresses are evergreen, while the oaks are *putres situ* (“rotten and collapsing”). Tiresias identifies the place suitable for his rites, but while in Seneca it consists of a pool (546–7), Statius transforms it into a soil fat with living gore: *Stygiis accomoda quippe / terra sacris, uiuoque placent sola pingui tabo* (“well-suited is the ground for Stygian rites, pleasing is the soil fattened with living gore,” *Theb.* 4.444–5).

But above all, the description of ritual that follows differs significantly, when the two poets are compared closely. In Seneca’s description a pit is dug, torches are thrown in (*Oed.* 550–1), the black animals are led to the pit and are burned alive (556–8). The second stage of the necromancy involves the invocation of Dis himself and the incantations that befit the circumstance. Libations of blood, milk, and wine are poured into the pit.¹³ Further incantations ensue to summon the ghosts of the dead.

uocat inde manes teque qui manes regis
et obsidentem claustra Lethaei lacus,
carmenque magicum uoluit et rabido minax
decantat ore quidquid aut placat leues
aut cogit umbras; sanguinem libat focus
solidasque pecudes urit et multo specum
saturat cruore; libat et niueum insuper
lactis liquorem, fundit et Bacchum manu
laeua canitque rursus ac terram intuens
grauiore manes uoce et attonita citat.

SEN. *OED.* 559–68

Next he calls up the shades, and you who reign over the souls, and the one who guards the gate to the lake of Lethe; he unrolls a magic incantation,

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- 11 As Newlands (2004) 141 has perceptively observed, the landscape in Statius borrows certain features from Ovidian descriptions too. On this sacred forest, cf. also Taisne (1994a) 169–74.
- 12 For *uiuo* . . . *tabo*, Shackleton Bailey (2003) 2.239 notes the parallel with *Theb.* 5.162 (*in sanguine uiuo*): “With *tabo*, decayed blood, *uiuo* seems abusive, but one is reluctant to accept the commonplace *multo*.”
- 13 As Boyle (2011) 245 notes, Seneca seems to follow Vergil here (*Aen.* 5.77–8), who in turn follows Homer, even though there we also have water. But Seneca invokes the Ovidian context of Medea’s sacrifice (*Met.* 7.242–50) too.

and with a threatening, frenzied mouth he recites whatever soothes or else forces the light ghosts to surrender. He pours a libation of blood on the fire, he burns the whole carcasses, and he saturates the trench with much blood. On top of that he makes a libation of snow-white liquid and pours wine with his left hand, he recites once more, and staring at the earth he summons the souls with a heavier, inspired voice.

Likewise Statius includes several elements from the Senecan description, adopting the standard features and practices encountered elsewhere in literary portrayals:

tum fera caeruleis intexit cornua sertis
 ipse manu tractans, notaeque in limite siluae
 principio largos nouies tellure cauata
 inclinat Bacchi latices et munera uerni
 lactis et Actaeos imbres suadumque cruorem
 manibus; aggeritur quantum bibit arida tellus.
 trunca dehinc nemora aduoluunt, maestusque sacerdos
 tres Hecatae totidemque satis Acheronte nefasto
 uirginibus iubet esse focos; tibi, rector Auerni,
 quamquam infossus humo superat tamen agger in auras
 pineus; hunc iuxta cumulo minor ara profundae
 erigitur Cereri; frontes atque omne cupressus
 intexit plorata latus. iamque ardua ferro
 signati capita et frugum libamine puro
 in uulnus cecidere greges; tunc innuba Manto
 exceptum pateris praelibat sanguen, et omnes
 ter circum acta pyras sancti de more parentis
 semineces fibras et adhuc spirantia reddit
 uiscera, nec rapidas cunctatur frondibus atris
 subiectare faces.

THEB. 4.449–68

Then with his own hands he manages the joining of the fierce horns with dark blue garlands; at the edge of the familiar forest first he tips nine times¹⁴ into the dug earth lavish drinks of Bacchus and gifts of

14 The adverbial *nouies* is translated as expressing locality by Shackleton Bailey ("in nine places"), whereas Vessey (1973) 253 and most recently Ritchie *et al.* (2007) 70 translate it as "nine times" (expressing frequency), which is also adopted above (also supported by Parkes [2012] 229). Cf. Sen. *Med.* 771–2: *tibi haec cruenta certa texuntur manu, / nouena*

fresh¹⁵ milk and Attic rain and blood that persuades the souls. As much is poured as the dry earth drinks. Then they roll down trunks of trees, and the sad priest orders that three hearths be made for Hecate and an equal number for the virgin daughters of inauspicious Acheron. For you, ruler of Avernus, a piny mound rises into the breezes, even though it is dug into the dirt. Next to this mound is raised an altar of smaller size to Ceres of the Underworld. A lamented cypress joins the front and every side. And now with their tall heads marked by the iron and the pure libation of offerings, the cattle fall at the blow. Then virgin Manto makes first libation of the blood caught in bowls, and having been led thrice around the pyres after the fashion of her sacred parent she offers half-dead fibers and entrails still alive. She does not delay to throw swift torches under the black leaves.

As Vessey observes, "Stattius' account of the necromantic ritual exceeds in complexity all its predecessors. Homer, Vergil, Seneca and Lucan have all contributed to it. As an example of Statian mannerism it could hardly be bettered."¹⁶ Unlike Seneca, where the weight of the ritual falls on the *carmina* produced by Tiresias, Statius metamorphoses the *uates* into a careful executioner of the details of the ritual, with emphasis on the extravagance of the process: whereas the animals come in small numbers ("all the finest necks that halter leads," 4.446), the priest pours into the dug pit libations nine times each and in abundance (cf. Hom. *Od.* 11.26–8). Vessey continues his perceptive remarks by noting that "Tiresias shows an equally lavish approach in constructing altars out of tree-trunks";¹⁷ three for Hecate, an equal number for the Furies, one for Dis, and a smaller one for Ceres/Proserpina of the underworld. And what is more, the sacrifice of the animals is offered in extravagant and obscure detail as well: the heads of the victims are "marked by the iron," in addition to the scattered grain, before the sacrifice that immediately follows (*ferro / signati capita et*

quae serpens ligat ("for you this wreath is woven with bloodstained hand and tied with serpents nine"); this is another instance of the use of the magical symbolism of number nine in ritual, when Medea is praying to Hecate and makes offerings (cf. also Hines [2000] 189 for further references on number nine).

15 On the use of the adjective *uernum* with this meaning, see Venini (1982).

16 Vessey (1973) 253. As he also observes, "the rites carried out by Tiresias and Manto exist entirely in the world of fantasy" (250). On Senecan ritual, he notes that "the more closely one examines the rites in Seneca, the more apparent it becomes that they are largely decorative (without denying that they may have some meaning within the context of the drama), a fusion of ideas from earlier literature, and they have acquired a life of their own" (245).

17 Vessey (1973) 253.

frugum libamine puro, *Theb.* 4.461–2). Moreover, Manto dances around the pyre three times, before finally offering the *semineces fibras et adhuc spirantia... uiscera* (“half-dead fibers and entrails still alive,” 466–7), while at the end she sets the leaves and boughs on fire. In other words, Statius does not limit himself to the sacrifice but surpasses his predecessor in the elaboration of the details to the extreme: the animals slain are not just burned, as in Seneca, but their entrails are removed before the victims even expire. Here Statius exploits the horrendous moment of child sacrifice from Seneca’s *Thyestes* (755–8), where the boys’ vitals are likewise portrayed, as we shall see below. The flair of an episode steeped in odd details and complex ceremonial minutiae resembles rather a description of unspeakable disasters that have yet to take place in the poem.

This new “old” Tiresias knows the script and prepares an elaborate ritual that vies with and exceeds the Neronian poet’s exposé. Statius’ account, however, displays many similarities to its Senecan counterpart, while it is beyond doubt organically incorporated into the framework of the *Thebaid*: the horrifying details underscore the impasse faced by the poet in recounting the *nefas* of the fratricide. One then has to disagree with the statement that behind Statius’ choices lurks a “minute attention habitually paid . . . to detail and to *Ungewohntheit* in his search for variation and brilliance within a valued and coercive tradition.”¹⁸ The Flavian poet uses the intertextual affiliation with Seneca’s *Oedipus* to promote his text as a sequel to the Neronian tragedy. And at the same time, Statius stresses the inevitability of *nefas*: Eteocles is present and terrified at the vision offered at the necromancy, as he is also incapable of action. Purification succeeds only temporarily: this is after all a *gens profana* (“unholy race,” *Theb.* 1.232).

Finally, as Laius utters a prophecy incomprehensible to Tiresias and Eteocles (*flexas dubios ambage relinquit*, “leaves them perplexed at his tortuous riddle,” 4.645), Statius seizes the opportunity to comment metapoetically on the king’s previous appearance in Seneca’s play. A powerful allusion to Seneca’s Laius confirms this intertextual gesture:

egitque in ortus semet et matri impios
fetus regessit, quique uix mos est feris,
fratres sibi ipse genuit . . .

SEN. *OED.* 638–40

18 Vessey (1973) 257–8; cf. also his comment: “Statius’ handling of the ritual is overextensive and in some ways injurious to the narrative” (251).

He has brought himself to his very source, he has carried unholy procreation back to his mother, and as happens seldom even among wild beasts, he has borne brothers for himself...

lectus ego...

qui uentura loquar? satis est meminisse priorum.
nostrane praeclari (pudeat) consulta nepotes
poscitis? illum, illum sacris adhibete nefastis,
qui laeto fodit ense patrem, qui semet in ortus
uertit et indignae regerit sua pignora matri.

THEB. 4.627–32

Have I been chosen... to tell what is coming? It is enough to remember the past. Do you, my wonderful grandsons, ask counsel of me? You should be ashamed! Bring *him* to your abominable rituals, him who stabbed his father with happy sword, who brings himself to his source and carries her own offspring back to his undeserving mother.

This is a chilling moment in both works. In Seneca, Creon recounts to an ignorant Oedipus Laius' revelation, but to no avail. And in Statius, Laius discloses the awful *nefas* to his grandson, who nevertheless stands in awe before the new riddles posed by his grandfather (4.641–4). Oedipus is conspicuous by his absence in both instances of the necromancy. Statius' Laius expresses his unceasing anger towards Oedipus, the cursed child who fathers children with his own mother (*regessit* ~ *regerit*) and who has now cursed that offspring as well. Statius vividly deploys the present tense, where Seneca opts for the perfect: Statius' Laius is looking into the future, in a continuation of Seneca's. The last sentence unveils his indignant mood as he further incriminates Oedipus: *geminumque nefas miserosque per enses / (ei mihi!) crudelis uincit pater* ("through twin impiety and unhappy swords, alas for me, your cruel father triumphs," 4.643–4). In the necromancy at Thebes, we witness the performance of an empty ritual, which underscores the inescapability of fate and the impossible boundaries placed on the protagonists, limits which cannot be overcome, as they move and act on this playground of predetermined *nefas*.¹⁹

19 Vessey (1973) 257: "Statius throws no doubt on the efficacy of the mantic arts, but he makes it plain that the use to which they are put is generally evil and vain." Similarly Taisne (1991) 268: "L'oracle qui'il prononce, en insistant sur les crimes d'Oedipe... ne laisse présager, pour les héros emprisonnés dans un destin inéluctable, qu'une issue funeste à la tragédie

Tydeus' Cannibalism

In Statius' *Thebaid* 8, the reader is invited to participate in the visual spectacle, the "banquet" of Tydeus' cannibalism, as the hero, who has performed the final *aristeia* of the book, defiles himself by committing cannibalism. The events in the last part of the book unfold quickly, as Tydeus enjoys his last day, before the grand finale: he becomes the hunter of Melanippus, the son of Astacus, and at the end he is transformed into the hunted object itself. Tydeus' final act of eating the raw, human flesh, the brains from Melanippus' severed head, forces Minerva to take away from her favorite warrior the gift of immortality:

"... caput, o caput, o mihi si quis
apportet, Melanippe, tuum! nam uolueris aruis,
fido equidem, nec me uirtus suprema fefellit.
i, precor, Atrei si quid tibi sanguinis umquam,
Hippomedon, uade, o primis puer inclute bellis
Arcas, et Argolicae Capaneu iam maxime turmae."

.....
erigitur Tydeus uultuque occurrit et amens
laetitiaque iraque, ut singultantia uidit
ora trucesque oculos seseque agnouit in illo,
imperat abscisum porgi, laeuaque receptum
spectat atrox hostile caput, gliscitque tepentis
lumina torua uidens et adhuc dubitantia figi.

THEB. 8.739–44, 751–6

"The head, oh could someone bring me your head, Melanippus! For you are rolling in the fields, I am quite sure, and my manliness did not fail me in the end. Go, I beg you, Hippomedon, if ever there was any drop of Atreus' blood in you! Go, boy of Arcadia, famous in your first war, and Capaneus, now greatest of the Argive band!" ... Tydeus raises himself and turns to meet him with his face. He is wild with joy and anger as he sees the gasping face and fierce eyes, and he recognizes himself in the other man. He orders that his enemy's head be cut off and brought to him. Receiving it in his left hand, he gazes at it savagely and swells up as he sees it still warm and the eyes, grim and still uncertain, growing fixed.

de Sènèque comme à l'épopée de Stace: la révélation ou l'accomplissement du *nefas*." Cf. also Schiesaro (2003) 228.

The eighth book began with a descent, the strange *katabasis* of Amphiaraus to the nether kingdom of Dis; now the narrative comes to a close with a failed ascent, the aborted *anabasis* of Tydeus to apotheosis in heaven. As soon as Tydeus' protectress, Pallas, returns from Olympus with the gift of immortality for her protégé, she witnesses the *nefas* committed and hurries back to Mt. Olympus after a ritual cleansing from pollution. The remarkable mingling of sources in Statius involves some obvious and other less clear models that contribute to the portrait of Tydeus' dehumanization.²⁰ I submit that Statius deploys a very close parallel scene from Seneca's tragedy on the Tantalids, *Thyestes*.²¹ In his speech, Tydeus demands the head of Melanippus from his comrades, invoking first of all Hippomedon. Here at line 742 there is an otherwise obscure reference to Hippomedon's origins from the house of Atreus, and thus to Seneca's Tantalid play.²² Critics have overlooked here the important intertext evoked by Statius: the intriguing reference to Atreus, who is portrayed by Statius as a contemporary (cf. *Theb.* 4.305–8), serves as an ironic reminder of the Thyestes story and Atreus' involvement in perpetrating an act of cannibalism.

And yet the Flavian poet portrays Tydeus as both Thyestes (the cannibal) and Atreus (the savage instigator of cannibalism). Tydeus' conscious choice of sacrilege is starkly contrasted to Thyestes' own ignorance of his brother Atreus' evil plans.²³ In Seneca Atreus' beheading, cutting up, and cooking of his nephews' limbs is narrated in vivid, macabre detail by the messenger (especially *Thy.* 691–788), who first describes the place of the *nefas*, the horrifying *nemus* ("grove," 651, 656): *hinc auspicari regna Tantalidae solent* ("Tantalid kings regularly inaugurate their reigns here," 657). The whole scene is presented before the eyes of the reader as a sacrificial ritual:

quo postquam furens
intrauit Atreus liberos fratris trahens,
ornantur arae—quis queat digne eloqui?

20 Vessey (1973) 226 and Ripoll (1998a) 329–31. On Tydeus' transformation to an animal, see Feeney (1991) 360; Hardie (1993) 65–6; Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 174–6 and 172–205 on dehumanization in general.

21 See Estèves (2005) 101 and n. 23 on the contamination of the Senecan account from Ov. *Met.* 6.601–74, the story of ignorant Tereus' cannibalism of Itys. Cf. also Ovid's *Ibis* 427–8 and 515–16.

22 There is no other reference in the poem or elsewhere confirming the hero's descent from Atreus, except for his lineage drawn from Mycenae (*Theb.* 9.514).

23 Also an allusion to Tantalus' failed immortality (e.g., Pind. *Ol.* 1.54–8) is possible in Tydeus' failure to secure his own.

post terga iuuenum nobiles reuocat manus
 et maesta uitta capita purpurea ligat;
 non tura desunt, non sacer Bacchi liquor
 tangensque salsa uictimam culter mola.
 seruatur omnis ordo, ne tantum nefas
 non rite fiat.

SEN. *THY.* 682–90

As Atreus enters there in frenzy, dragging his brother's children, the altar is decorated. Who could express it as it deserves? He pulls the youths' noble hands behind their backs and twines their sad heads with a purple ribbon. The incense is not absent, nor Bacchus' holy liquid nor the knife that touches the victim with salted meal offering. Every part of the rite is preserved to ensure that such an abomination happens by the rules.

Atreus is following the law to the letter, as expressed eloquently by litotes with the alliteration of the syllable *ne-* (*ne tantum nefas* / *non rite fiat*). Incense, wine, and the *mola salsa* (a mixture of salt and wheat) are encountered in similar ritual contexts, as we have also seen above in *Oedipus* and *Thebaid* 4. Atreus functions as the priest (*ipse est sacerdos, ipse funesta prece* / *letale carmen ore uiolento canit*, "he himself is the priest, he himself utters sinister prayers and sings the death chant with a bloodthirsty mouth," *Thy.* 691–2). Like Tydeus (*Theb.* 8.751–2), Atreus mingles joy with savagery as he contemplates the abominable act, only hesitating for a minute (*sed dubitat et saeuum scelus* / *iuuat ordinare*, "yet he hesitates, and it pleases him to order the savage crime," *Thy.* 715–16). The slaughter of his nephews follows (721–9), while the extraction of the boys' entrails is portrayed in excruciating detail by the messenger to the men of the chorus (753–64).

Atreus preserves the boys' heads, the final step of his revenge scheme. But what makes this gruesome scene of Seneca's play so remarkable is Atreus' chilling insistence on ritual: he performs an *extispicium* by examining the entrails of his victims as if to suggest that he has performed some regular, divinely sanctioned rite.²⁴ Both Atreus and Tydeus act out of revenge. As for Thyestes, Seneca's emphasis on his ignorance draws a line between the Senecan hero and Tydeus, who consciously commits the nefarious act of anthropophagy in the *Thebaid*. As Thyestes indulges in his impious feast, the messenger apostrophizes, *in malis unum hoc tuis* / *bonum est, Thyesta, quod mala ignoras*

24 As Tarrant (1985) *ad Thy.* 755–8 observes, Atreus "seems to have no serious intention of learning the future but simply to be displaying perverse regard for established form."

tua! ("in your evils, there is one boon, Thyestes, that you are ignorant of your evils!", 782–3).

Moreover, whereas Thyestes consumes the rest of the bodies of his sons, their heads and hands are preserved for the final *anagnorisis* (764). Thyestes' realization at 1006, *agnosco fratrem* ("I recognize my brother"), is exploited by Statius in Tydeus' recognition of his own self in Melanippus' head at *Thebaid* 7.752–3: *ut singultantia uidit / ora trucesque oculos seseque agnouit in illo* ("as he sees the gasping face and fierce eyes, and he recognizes himself in the other man"). Vision and taste here collaborate to a paradoxical effect, to elevate the reader's/spectator's feeling of disgust and thus to defy the expectation for *katharsis*.²⁵ In both Seneca and Statius the ritual sacrifice constitutes the "ultimate desecration of religion."²⁶

As religion and ritual are pushed to the extremes by Seneca's Atreus and Thyestes and their literary descendant Tydeus, the reader is left to contemplate the crossing of the boundaries between epic and tragedy, as we have also seen above in the necromancy at Thebes. Schiesaro supports the view that Atreus' "imitation of and competition with the past are . . . essential components of his poetics of the sublime,"²⁷ and I submit that Statius propels his narrative in paths untrodden by epic before: tragedy and epic share common ground, as the epic poet borrows from Senecan tragedy and contaminates his narrative with a scene of cannibalism, which upsets the possibility of an epic *katharsis* and a resolution from the extreme violence that pesters the world of the *Thebaid*.

Tragic Closure?

The last book of the epic has been variously interpreted with regard to the final outcome of Theseus' victory over Creon. Optimistic and pessimistic readings of the *Thebaid* have found favor with an equal number of followers among Statius' critics.²⁸ Departing from this binarism of interpretations, however, let us look at the final duel between Theseus and Creon in terms of its relationship with Senecan drama:

25 Cf. Staley (2010) 80–1: "shock and revulsion, *ekplexis* or stupor, serve . . . not to teach an audience but to make it feel; they are the natural property of effective drama."

26 Pratt (1983) 106.

27 Schiesaro (2003) 225.

28 See Augoustakis (2010b) 75–91 with further bibliography, and Dominik, pp. 266–90 and Criado, pp. 291–306 in this volume.

risit uocesque manumque
 horridus Aegides, ferrataque arbore magnos
 molitur iactus, nec non prius ore superbo
 intonat: "Argolici, quibus haec datur hostia, manes,
 pandite Tartareum chaos ultricesque parate
 Eumenidas, uenit ecce Creon!"

THEB. 12.768–73

The wild son of Aegeus laughed at the voice and the hand and devises a huge throw with his steel-tipped tree, but first he thunders with an arrogant mouth: "Argive souls, to whom this victim is offered, open wide the chaos of Tartarus, prepare the avenging Furies, for behold, Creon comes!"

Then Theseus kills Creon and triumphantly stands over the corpse, announcing the long awaited burial of the Argive soldiers, as well as Creon's own. As Pollmann observes, in Euripides' *Supplices* (707–18), Theseus does not kill Creon, while in Statius "Theseus slaughters Creon without mercy and without pause for thought, in contrast to Aeneas, who reflects before killing Turnus."²⁹ In Euripides, in fact, Theseus is reported to say that he came to ask for the dead, not to sack the city (οὐ γὰρ ὡς πέρσων πόλιν μολεῖν ἔφασκεν ἀλλ' ἀπαιτήσων νεκρούς, *Supp.* 724–5), which makes Statius' choice rather remarkable: this Theseus has not come to enter Thebes peacefully.³⁰ What has not been noted heretofore, however, is the manner in which Theseus' final invocation before murdering Creon resonates with the necromancy scene in Seneca's *Oedipus*: there Creon is present for Tiresias' necromantic ritual; after several attempts to perform the correct rites to summon the ghosts of the dead, the seer exclaims:

29 Pollmann (2004) 264 and 274, where she compares this scene to Verg. *Aen.* 12.928–52; cf. Dominik (1994b) 98: "When the Athenian monarch confronts Creon, he quickly slays his Theban counterpart without showing even a trace of mercy (768–81). . . . [Theseus'] conduct compares unfavourably with the behaviour of Vergil's Aeneas, who at least pauses briefly and gives some thought to sparing Turnus before dispatching him in a blind rage (*Aen.* 12.928–52, esp. 946ff., 951)." See also Bessone (2008) on Theseus and *clementia*, with an excellent discussion of the use by Statius of the Euripidean tragedy and Senecan philosophical discourse to express inevitable pessimism concerning the status of this war as fair or justly wrong.

30 See further Criado, p. 296 in this volume.

“audior” uates ait,
 “rata uerba fudi: rumpitur caecum chaos
 iterque populis Ditis ad superos datur.”

SEN. OED. 571–3

“I am heard,” said the priest, “the spells I poured out were valid: blind chaos is opened, and a path to the upper world is given to the populations of Dis.”

Whereas in Seneca’s play, the *chaos* is broken³¹ to allow the ghosts’ *anabasis* and revelation of the future, Theseus’ command, *pandite Tartareum chaos*, aims to open up the underworld for Creon’s *katabasis*, in order to settle the disputes of the past forever. As Fantham observes, Statius’ “epic presents a world in which human hatred is the central proliferating power of evil that only piety and clemency can bring to an end. The characterization of the *Thebaid* may be grotesquely negative, more black than white; but its point of view is both moral and retributive, leaving the world to those who punish the guilty without animosity and deal with their neighbors unmoved by envy, anger, fear or the hatred which they generate.”³² And yet the elaborate intertextual conversation between Statius and Seneca at the moment of Creon’s death invites the reader to participate in the Flavian poet’s reconfiguration of tragic *katharsis*: in this poem on the Theban civil war, there can exist no clear-cut cleansing solution, since the poem ends with lamentation and the confession of the poet’s powerlessness to continue. Moreover, the prayer for the breaching of the underworld in Oedipus’ opening curse (1.56–87), which let loose the Furies and demons upon the earth, is uncannily echoed in Theseus’ call for “Tartarean chaos” yet again to open. The conclusion of this war is soon to be succeeded by another one, waged by the Epigonoι, in an endless series of civil war strife. The *Thebaid* ultimately follows in the footsteps of the epic tradition of lament, just like *Iliad* 24, and not in the tragic manner of a resolution, the product of *katharsis*. Thus what emerges at the end of the *Thebaid* is a mingling of genres, in a game where, however, epic is ultimately privileged. In an astute summary of the *Thebaid*’s wavering between epic and tragedy, Bessone has named it the “epica del *nefas* e poetica della tragedia.”³³ Indeed, just as Seneca “‘contaminates’ epic with tragedy far more than he ‘disinfects’

31 See Boyle (2011) 246 on the translingual pun of *chaos* with *rumpo*.

32 Fantham (1997) 212 [= (2011) 605].

33 Bessone (2011) 25–9, 86–101, *et passim*.

drama with it,"³⁴ so Statius grafts his epic poem with tragic overtones; as Ripoll perceptively observes, Statius chooses the epic form because it completes the lessons learned from tragedy.³⁵ But in the end the Flavian poet defies our expectations for a cleansing experience. The landscape of the poem is infected with enduring pollution.

34 Schiesaro (2003) 251.

35 Ripoll (1998b) 337–8: "La *Thébaïde* s'ouvre comme une tragédie avec les malédictions d'Oedipe, et s'achève sur le mode de l'épopée... Stace vise en effet à mettre en évidence les ressorts psychologiques et moraux de ce type de conflit indépendamment des contingences historiques. La référence à la tragédie élargit la portée de l'épopée. Inversement, le cadre épique permet à Stace d'affirmer une forme de providentialisme induisant un dépassement du conflit tragique. La référence à l'épopée complète la leçon de la tragédie. C'est donc bien vers un enrichissement réciproque des deux genres littéraires que tend cette expérience de fusion."

Lucan's *De Bello Civili* in the *Thebaid*

Paul Roche

Statius ends the *Thebaid* with an apostrophe to the poem itself, in which the narrator urges it to live on and warns it not to challenge the *Aeneid*, but always to worship and follow the footsteps of Vergil's epic from afar (12.810–19, esp. 816–17). It is naturally a much-discussed passage at a highly authoritative moment in the text, and however we frame or measure the sincerity of Statius' declared inferiority to the *Aeneid* (here and at 10.445–8), we are left with an explicit statement of poetic emulation which directs us to the *Aeneid* as a key text for understanding Statius' poetic project.¹ However, the very first words of the *Thebaid* look back, not to Vergil's *Aeneid*, but to Lucan's *De Bello Civili*. Statius declares at the outset of his proem that he will sing of *fraternas acies* ("fraternal battle-lines," *Theb.* 1.1), a phrase pointing the reader to Lucan's own proem, wherein Lucan includes *cognatas . . . acies* ("kindred battle-lines," 1.4) among the subjects of his song and as one of the explanatory restatements of his opening paradox, *bella . . . plus quam ciuilia* ("more than civil wars," 1.1).² Both phrases indicate the foregrounded theme of intra-familial conflict running through their respective narratives. In Statius this is explicit; in Lucan the marriage connection between Caesar and Pompey via the latter's marriage to Julia facilitates the analogy. Note also that Lucan's phrase *cognatas acies* is influenced by the explicitly Oedipal context of Seneca, *Oedipus* 738, wherein the chorus cites the *agmina . . . cognata* ("kindred columns") of the Cadmean Spartoi to show an unbroken history of divine anger afflicting the Labdacid house.³ The two phrases also neatly illustrate the sense of poetic competition, influentially cast by Bloom as an Oedipal struggle,⁴ informing Statius' reception

1 Vessey (1973) 44; Hardie (1993) 110–11; Nugent (1996) 46–71; Dominik (2003) 91–109; Ganiban (2007) 2–6.

2 See, e.g., Vessey (1973) 61; Dominik (1994b) 169–170, esp. 170, (2003) 100–2, esp. 100; Delarue (2000) 102. Roche (2009b) 93, 100–3, 105 discusses Lucan's phrase.

3 The adjective has its own special resonance throughout the *Oedipus*: cf., e.g., *sceptra . . . lapsa cognatae domus* ("the fallen scepter of your kindred house," 513), *O Cadmi effera / cruore semper laeta cognato domus* ("O savage house of Cadmus, always joyful in kindred blood," 626–7), *si me fides sacrata cognati laris* ("the sworn oath of a kindred Lar," 672).

4 Bloom (1973), e.g., 10–11, with Hardie (1993) 116–19, esp. 117.

of Lucan as a poetic predecessor in the *Thebaid*. The potentially closer blood-relation and greater specificity of Statius' adjective *fraternas* ("fraternal") can be read as trumping Lucan's more generalizing *cognatas acies*:⁵ Lucan's latent Oedipal metaphor for the civil war between Caesar and Pompey⁶ has become completely literalized in the first words of Statius' poem and their application to the armies of Eteocles and Polynices.⁷

This opening example is typical of many of the nuances at work in Statius' engagement with Lucan's *De Bello Civili*. My present aim is to demonstrate something of the importance, character, and extent of Lucan's influence upon and within the *Thebaid*: to illustrate via some representative examples of allusion Statius' rationale in his engagement with Lucan and its place within the narrative strategies of his own epic, and to consider the role of this engagement in Statius' positioning of his own poem as a successor to that of Lucan. I have not been able here to discuss the manner in which Lucan's influence very frequently operates in a nexus with other authors who are vital to his project (such as Homer, Vergil, Ovid, and Greek and Roman tragedy), but will instead concentrate on isolating the role of Lucan's epic for the *Thebaid* without, I hope, implying that it is to the exclusion of these and other precursors. Previous discussions of Lucan's influence upon the *Thebaid* have tended to foreground such aspects as Statius' reception of Lucan's supernatural, especially necromancy and prophecy, particularly in pursuit of a sense of horror or foreboding; his theodicy; his poetics of *nefas*; his closural devices; his attention to tyranny; his attention to the gaze, especially on the battlefield; his female voices of grief; his approach to death and burial; his narrative technique and emotionally engaged style; his poetics more generally, whether defined (previously) as "mannerist" or relative to notions of Callimachean poetics; his positioning of his poem against the *Aeneid*; or the socio-political contexts of

5 Vessey (1986a) 296g; Henderson (1993) 165; Ganiban (2007) 45; *TLL* 3.1479.79 lists *propinquus* ("a relative, kinsmen") or *affinis* ("a relation by marriage") as synonyms for *cognatus* in this sense.

6 Lucan's metaphor finds momentary realization at 4.177 and 7.464–6 when opposing armies near Ilerda and Pharsalus recognize kinsmen and family members in the opposing ranks; see Leigh (1997) 46–50 for discussion. On Statius reifying metaphor and simile in Lucan, see Delarue (2000) 97–8.

7 Statius re-uses the phrase *fraternas acies* (which is itself unique to Statius) only at 1.184 of the Cadmean Spartoi, where it suggests a similarly agonistic inflation of Seneca's own description of the Spartoi as *agmina . . . cognata* (*Oed.* 738). At the same time, it foregrounds Statius' erudition as reader of Lucan since the use of the phrase only at *Theb.* 1.1 and 184 performs a kind of "citation" of Lucan's Senecan "source" for *cognatas acies* (*Luc.* 1.4).

his poem, as manifested, for example, in the praise of Nero at Lucan 1.33–66.⁸ The topic is vast, and scale dictates a selective approach, so I shall here consider Lucan's influence upon Statius under three headings: heroes and their Lucanian models; power and its tenure in the Rome of the *De Bello Civili* and Statius' Thebes; and the treatment of war, its aftermath, and their paradoxes.

Heroes and Their Models

A natural locus for gauging the reception of an epic poem in its successor texts lies in the epic genealogy of its protagonists.⁹ Lucan's heroes help to generate meaning as models in the *Thebaid* via a shifting and often momentary (but by no means exclusive) sequence of allusions made in the *Thebaid* to the heroes of Lucan's epic and the contexts of their actions. Thus, Tydeus' programmatic characterization as *immodicus irae* ("excessive in wrath," *Theb.* 1.41), or his epithet *fulmineus* ("thunderbolt-like," 4.94) is suggestive of his role as an inheritor of a long tradition of earlier epic heroes marked by excessive anger, including Lucan's Caesar, who is introduced with the formulation *acer et indomitus, quo spes quoque ira uocasset, / ferre manum* ("fierce and indomitable, he moved his hand to where hope and rage had summoned him," Luc. 1.146–7), and is compared to a thunderbolt (1.151–7). Throughout the poem, however, Tydeus takes on nuances of a number of Lucan's heroes as it suits Statius' agenda. When Tydeus exclaims *o quanta Cithaeron / funera sanguineusque uadis, Ismene, rotabis!* ("what great carnage, Cithaeron, and you, Ismenos, shall roll in your blood-stained waters!", *Theb.* 2.460–1), the reader may immediately recall the outburst of Vergil's Sybil, *bella, horrida bella, / et Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine cerno* ("war dreadful war, I see, and the Tiber foaming with copious blood," *Aen.* 6.87–8). But the context of Tydeus' utterance (the hero coerced into battle) and his emphasis on heavy rank and file casualties immediately preceding his exclamation (*Theb.* 2.458–60; cf. Luc. 7.114–15) simultaneously evoke Lucan's Pompey on the morning of Pharsalus: *quot regna iacebunt! / sanguine Romano quam turbidus ibit Enipeus!* ("How many kingdoms will be laid low! How murky the Enipeus will flow with Roman blood!", Luc. 7.115–16). In

8 As a representative selection, cf. Legras (1905a) 30–144 (tracing "sources" for Statius more generally); Venini (1965a), (1965b), (1967), (1970) xix–xxi; Vessey (1973) 11–12, 235–58; Malamud (1995) 21–7; Lovatt (1999); Micozzi (1999), (2004); Delarue (2000) 97–112; McNelis (2007); Ganiban (2007) 36–8, 62–3, 204.

9 See, e.g., Anderson (1957); Mackay (1957); Ahl (1976) tracking various models at 150–274, esp. 183–9 and 209–29; van Nortwick (1980); West (1990); Hardie (1993) 1–18; Leigh (1997) 148–52.

the ambush scene which concludes *Thebaid* 2, Lucan's Scaeva becomes especially paradigmatic for Tydeus, as the "one versus the many" (e.g., *Theb.* 2.548–9, 620–1; cf. *Luc.* 6.189, 204–5).¹⁰ Scaeva's elevated position on the rampart casting down corpses, boulders, and timber upon the Pompeians (*Luc.* 6.169–73) is echoed in Tydeus' steep position near the seat of the Sphinx and in his casting down a huge boulder to devastating effect (*Theb.* 2.558–81); each hero follows this initial salvo by jumping down to the level of his enemies (*Luc.* 6.180–3; *Theb.* 2.581), who are densely packed and obstructed by their own numbers (*Luc.* 6.184–5; *Theb.* 2.585–6, 590–3). Statius transforms Scaeva's gloating over Aulus (*Luc.* 6.241–6)—the point of which was Scaeva's love of death—into Tydeus' declaration to the supplicating Menoetes that war is inevitable (*Theb.* 2.655–9). The ambush narrative amounts to an attempt by Statius at recouping the particular super- or sub-human energy of Lucan's Scaeva within a context which is less overtly transgressive in ethical terms (at this stage of the poem) and is positioned earlier within his narrative to imply the potential of his climactic battle to surpass it. When at the culmination of his *aristeia* in book 2, Tydeus declares to his victims *hic aliae caedes, alius furor* ("here is another kind of slaughter, another kind of *furor*," *Theb.* 2.667), the usual kind of *caedes* and *furor* in the mind of the reader is of a distinctly Lucanian character.¹¹ It has been noted that Scaeva emerges as a model for Tydeus again at *Thebaid* 8.700–12.¹² When, in the lead-up to his final *aristeia*, his opponent Haemon is described as a wild boar grazed by and enraged by a Lucanian spear (*Lucana cuspide*, 8.532), the reader is entitled to read into the epithet both poetic word-play and geographic significance.

In the embassy scene Eteocles is viewed by Tydeus at *Thebaid* 2.384–7 in precisely the same manner and vocabulary as Pompey is viewed by Caesar at *Lucan* 1.314–5: as a tyrant holding onto *regnum* beyond his apportioned time (cf. esp. *Theb.* 2.386).¹³ This Pompeian nuance is further developed in the aftermath of Eteocles' failed ambush attempt—when he is thwarted by the Caesarian/Scaevan force of Tydeus—by evoking Lucan's Pompey conceding battle with Caesar to his troops at Pharsalus: both heroes are now compared to helpless captains of ships buffeted by storm winds (*Theb.* 3.22–32 and *Luc.* 7.123–7; cf. esp. 3.30 and 7.126–7). We might see the last flowering of this

10 Recalled again at 8.666–8; cf. Hardie (1993) 3–10 on "the one and the many." The models for Tydeus in this scene are, however, particularly numerous; cf. Gervais (2015b).

11 Cf. Lucan's tendency to describe his poetic subject matter as *hic furor* at key moments (1.669 and 681, both anticipating the events of the war; 7.551 at Pharsalus).

12 Williams (1978) 203; Henderson (1991) 57; Hardie (1993) 69 n. 23; McNelis (2007) 130–2.

13 For the scene, see Vessey (1973) 141–6.

sequence of "Pompeian" models for Eteocles in his role, à la Lucan's Sextus, as frightened and unworthy necromancer at *Thebaid* 4.490–9 (cf. Luc. 6.423, 596–7).¹⁴ This intertextual relationship with Lucan's Pompeian forces is by no means exclusive. At *Thebaid* 3.75–8 Maeon casts Eteocles in the role of Caesar, assailed by the ghosts of the war's casualties (as at Luc. 7.772–6), and in the same scene, Maeon himself incorporates nuances of both Metellus in opposition to Caesar at Rome (*Theb.* 3.77–8; cf. Luc. 3.141–4) and Domitius, dying a free man in opposition to Caesar at Pharsalus (*Theb.* 3.83–7; cf. Luc. 7.610–15).¹⁵ When Eteocles concludes his speech to his night watchmen at 10.34–5 with the notion that they are watching over wealth and plunder that is already theirs, he is modeling himself on Caesar, who at Pharsalus exhorts his troops to hurry to plunder Pompey's camp (Luc. 7.737–46), and concludes with the paradox that all the riches which Pharsalus had made theirs (*quascumque tuas Pharsalia fecit*, 745) were themselves being plundered by the fleeing Pompeians.

This allusive relationship also informs Statius' Polynices. When he tells Adrastus of his resolve to challenge Eteocles, he reflects on the sacrifice made by Tydeus: *uidi exanimum fecique nocentem* / *Tydea* ("I saw Tydeus lifeless and made him guilty," *Theb.* 11.176–7). Whatever the precise nuance of the paradox *feci nocentem* as used by Polynices, it taps rhetorically into a very prominent theme of Lucan's epic, that of the normative moral potential of victory, defeat, and participation in civil war, as expressed by Brutus and Cato ([Brutus to Cato] *accipient alios, facient te bella nocentem*, "the wars will receive others [already guilty], they will make you guilty," Luc. 2.259; [Cato] *crimen erit superis et me fecisse nocentem*, "it will be the gods' reproach to have made even me guilty," 2.288), by Caesar (*haec acies uictum factura nocentem est*, "this is a battle which will make the conquered guilty," 7.260), by the narrator (*rapit omnia casus / atque incerta facit quos uult fortuna nocentes*, "Chance snatches up everything and fortune randomly makes whom she wishes guilty," 7.487–8), and by others in the poem.¹⁶

When Amphiaraus, conducting augury to determine whether to go to war, states *similes non ante metus aut astra notauit / prodigiosa magis; quamquam maiora parantur* ("I have not previously observed terrors like these or skies more prodigious. Yet greater things are being prepared," *Theb.* 3.522–3), his model is Lucan's Arruns, who, conducting extispicy at the onset of Caesar's invasion, declares *non fanda timemus, / sed uenient maiora metu* ("we fear the unspeakable, but things greater than our fear will come," Luc. 1.634–5).

14 See Vessey (1973) 235–58 on the multiple models informing the scene.

15 Vessey (1973) 110–16 discusses Maeon's suicide, but does not note these further models.

16 E.g., Pompey to the Mitylenians (8.137); Pothinus to Ptolemy (8.484).

Hippomendon at the Asopus (*Theb.* 7.430–5) usurps a role we might have expected from Polynices as leader of the expedition, by re-enacting Caesar's crossing of Rubicon (Luc. 1.185–222, esp. 204–5, 220–2) in a scene which similarly expands upon the physical space of the river (*Theb.* 7.426–9; cf. Luc. 1.217–19).¹⁷ During his *aristeia* he imports details of the super-human rage of Scaeva (*Theb.* 9.144–7; cf. Luc. 6.196–201).¹⁸ When Capaneus claims *uirtus* (“courage”) as his *numen* (“divinity”) at *Thebaid* 3.615, he not only adopts the blasphemy of Vergil's Mezentius at *Aeneid* 10.773, but marks himself, too, as an heir of Scaeva, whose fellow-soldiers had worshipped the divinity (*numen*) and the living semblance of the goddess Virtus within his mutilated breast (Luc. 6.253–4). As with Statius' Tydeus, this allusion so early in Capaneus' presence in the narrative suggests his assumption of the summative energy of Scaeva's battle-rage as his starting point in the *Thebaid*.¹⁹ During the *aristeia* of Capaneus in book 10, many of the themes from Scaeva's *aristeia* are incorporated into his blasphemous assault upon the city (*Theb.* 10.859 and Luc. 6.198–201; *Theb.* 10.877–82 and Luc. 6.172–3).²⁰

This allusive relationship extends equally to minor characters. In the aftermath of the Theban ambush, as Ide searches through the corpses of the slain in search of her twin sons (*Theb.* 3.133–46), her grief is compared with the necromantic rites of “a Thessalian woman”:

Thessalis haud aliter bello gauisa recenti,
cui gentile nefas hominem reuocare canendo,
multifida attollens antiqua lumina cedro
nocte subit campos uersatque in sanguine functum
uulgus et explorat manes, cui plurima busto
imperet ad superos: animarum maesta queruntur
concilia, et nigri pater indignatur Auerni.

THEB. 3.140–6

Not otherwise a Thessalian woman—whose national *nefas* it is to bring the dead back to life through incantation—visits the fields by night, overjoyed at fresh war, upholding her splintered torch of ancient cedar, and

17 See McNelis (2007) 120–3.

18 See Dewar (1991) 87: “Hippomendon...recalls and excels Lucan's Scaeva...Mighty engines of war would be necessary to dislodge Scaeva, but even they could not have prevailed against Hippomendon.”

19 For *uirtus* in Lucan, see Fantham (1995); Sklenář (2003) esp. 101–52.

20 Vessey (1973) 223 on these gigantomachic nuances.

turns the dead crowd over in its blood and explores the shades: to which body should she give most orders for the upper world? The grim council of souls complains and the father of black Avernus is indignant.

The allusion is unmistakably to Lucan's Erictho, who is described as an habitual re-animator of corpses (6.531–2, 619–20); whom Sextus finds looming above the Pharsalian plain in gleeful anticipation of the battle and her access to its bodies (6.577–86); who searches through the corpses on the plain under a thick cover of night (6.624–6). Even the deliberative questions in Lucan's description of her hunt for the right corpse are preserved (Luc. 6.633; cf. *Theb.* 3.144–5). Statius remarkably presses *the* classic scene of high horror in the *De Bello Civili* into the service of pathos. The search for the right corpse for necromancy is transformed into a mother's search for the bodies of her own sons, and the notion of a return to life under the power of the necromancer—so hideously insistent in the Lucanian hypotext—stands in high contrast to Ide's permanent loss and helplessness. Statius' allusion—his eye for where to invoke Erictho as a point of comparison—is every bit as grotesque and affecting as its model.²¹

Power and Its Tenure

Lucan profoundly influences Statius' treatment of power, its possession, tenure, use, and abuse. In his speech before Eteocles, Tydeus urges him, *pone modum laetis* ("set a limit to prosperous times," *Theb.* 2.406), and thereby invokes one of Lucan's fundamental laws of power: *in se magna ruunt: laetis hunc numina rebus / crescendi posuere modum* ("great things collapse in upon themselves: for prosperous times divine powers have set this limit of growth," Luc. 1.81–2). When earlier in the same speech Tydeus advises Eteocles, *teque ordine certo / fortunam exuere et laetum descendere regno* ("that you give up your fortunate position in the order determined and happily step down from the throne," *Theb.* 2.395–6), he is invoking Caesar's own embittered apostrophe to Pompey at Ariminum: *ex hoc iam te, improbe, regno / ille tuus saltem doceat descendere Sulla* ("grasping man, at least let that Sulla of yours teach you to descend from that reign," Luc. 1.334–5). When Eteocles replies to Tydeus that he will not descend from his royal power, his reasoning—*iam pectora uulgi / adsueuere iugo* ("by now the people's hearts have grown used to the yoke," *Theb.* 2.442–3)—mirrors the

21 Cf. Vessey (1973) 126: "...there are times when human grief cannot be adequately portrayed within the conventional resources of language and metaphor."

reasoning of Caesar for dislodging Pompey from his position of pre-eminence at Rome: *detrahimus dominos urbi servire paratae* ("we are dragging its overlords from a city ready to serve," Luc. 1.351).

Statius inherits Lucan's attention to the subject's view of politically dominant figures. The Theban crowd in *Thebaid* 1 mirrors the *populus* at Ariminum in *De Bello Civili* 1 in position, context, and detail, and their reaction to Eteocles is closely mapped onto the reaction of the Ariminenses to Caesar. For example, at Thebes, *tacitumque a principe uulgus / dissidet* ("the silent multitude dissents from their prince," *Theb.* 1.169–70);²² at Lucan's Ariminum, *tacito mutos uoluunt in pectore questus* ("they turn mute complaints in their silent heart," Luc. 1.247). Statius had already cued the reader to this comparison by describing the king's view of Thebes—*respiceres ius omne tuum cunctosque minores, / et nusquam par stare caput* ("you saw all law yours, and all men inferior, and nowhere did a head stand equal to yours," *Theb.* 1.167–8)—in terms evoking a momentary resolution of the fundamental anxiety of Lucan's protagonists: *nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarue priorem / Pompeiusue parem* ("Caesar could not now endure anyone as a superior, nor Pompey an equal," Luc. 1.125–6). Eteocles' totalizing assumption of all legal prerogatives had found broad illustration in Lucan's Caesar at Rome (Luc. 3.97–112), wherein he had summoned the senate in accordance with no law (104) and when, in the absence of consuls, praetors, and anyone to fill the curule chairs (105–7), *omnia Caesar erat* ("Caesar was all things," 108).

Lucan's inner monologue of the silent Ariminenses (Luc. 1.248–57) informs the speech of Statius' plebeian representative of the silent Theban multitude at *Thebaid* 1.173–96. The Ariminenses' recollection of their repeated occupation by invading forces finds its sequel in the Theban's anticipation of their own sequence of alternating kings; the historical precedents witnessed by Ariminum at Lucan 1.254–6 have their counterpart in the mythological antecedents cited at *Thebaid* 1.180–5. Both subject groups lay heavy emphasis on the role of fate and fortune (Luc. 1.251, 256; *Theb.* 1.174, 176, 177, cf. 194). The Ariminenses claim *nos praeda furentum / primaque castra sumus* ("we are the plunder and first camp of madmen," Luc. 1.250–1), the Theban claims *nos uilis in omnes / prompta manus casus, domino cuicumque parati* ("we are a worthless band: readily inclined to any chance, prepared for whatever master," *Theb.* 1.191–2).

22 The scene is echoed at *Theb.* 2.480–1: *aspectant matres, saeuoque infanda precantur / Oenidae tacitoque simul sub pectore regi* ("mothers watched and heaped curses on the savage son of Oeneus, and at the same time, in their silent hearts, on their king").

A comparison of the two speeches also sheds light on underlying concepts of political power at work in both epics. The Theban adverts to the moderating influence of partners in power: *cernis ut erectum torua sub fronte minetur / saeuior adsurgens dempto consorte potestas?* ("do you see how power surging upright more savagely now that its partner is removed threatens us with its stern brow?", *Theb.* 1.186–7). In doing so he evokes Lucan's contemplation of the predestined *failure* of the attempt to share power within the triumvirate at 1.84–93: a sequence which culminates in the *sententia* that, for all time, *omnisque potestas / impatiens consortis erit* ("all power will be unable to endure a partner," 92–3). When the Theban asks of Eteocles, *hicne umquam priuatus erit?* ("will this man ever be a private citizen?", *Theb.* 1.189), he hits at one of the most conspicuously contested notions of Lucan's poem—retirement from public office—via a term prominent in Roman public life and Lucan, but absent from the epics of Vergil and Ovid. Caesar claims that Pompey prepared civil war *ne . . . teneat priuata senectus* ("lest a private old age confine him," *Luc.* 1.324); Caesar's troops had the power to render him *priuatus*, and by extension to force a reconciliation with Pompey, by their non-compliance (4.188, 5.366); in his own all-or-nothing rhetorical formulation, Caesar claims he will die as a *priuatus* because his final political ambitions have not been completely realized (5.668);²³ in Cato's eulogy, Pompey is lauded because he alone remained a *priuatus* when the plebs were willing to serve him (9.193–4). Examples from Lucan could be multiplied. In Statius, Polynices will later recollect this same political moment as *illa dies, qua, sorte benigna / fratris, Echionia steterat priuatus in aula* ("that day on which by the lot favoring his brother, he had stood in the Echionian court, a *priuatus*," *Theb.* 2.309–10).

War, Death and Their Paradoxes

Both poems emphasize a nexus of duties and patriotism which must be overcome in the rank and file in order for the war to proceed. Statius describes the (unnamed) deity of war in these terms:

iamque hos clipeum, iam uertit ad illos
arma ciens aboletque domos, conubia, natos.
pellitur et patriae et, qui mente nouissimus exit,
lucis amor . . .

THEB. 8.384–7

23 For discussion, see Matthews (2008) 244.

And now he turns his shield now on these, now on those, stirring up arms, abolishing homes, wives, children. Love of country is driven out and, last to leave the mind, love of the light . . .

Earlier, Mars had brought it about that *ferus omni in pectore saeuit / mortis amor caedisque, nihil flagrantibus obstat* ("fierce love of death and slaughter rages in every breast and nothing stands in their passion's way," 7.137–8). Both his function and his impact are very similar to the various goads to war which overwhelm familial connections and patriotism in Lucan. At Ariminum, for example, Caesar's soldiers are hesitant owing to *pietas patrique penates* ("their sense of obligation and paternal hearth gods," Luc. 1.353). These are overcome by their love of the sword and their fear of Caesar (1.355–6), who is himself compared to the war goddess Bellona at Pharsalus (7.568). Their readiness to fight or to die is encapsulated in Laelius' oath to kill his brother, father, wife, and unborn child (1.376–8) and Vulteius' wish that his elders and children were present with him for the mass-suicide he is about to enact (4.504). Statius' trumped *amor lucis* ("love of the light") finds not only a sequel in Menoeceus' *amor mortis* ("love of death," *Theb.* 10.804), but one of its most pointed antecedents in the spurning of life and fanatical love of death expressed by Caesarians such as Vulteius and Scaeva (Luc. 4.476–520, 6.246).²⁴

The advance of the Argive army is reported at Thebes in terms evoking the rumors at Rome reporting Caesar's invasion of the Italian peninsula (*Theb.* 4.369–77 [repeated at 7.457–8]; Luc. 1.469–86): Statius privileges Lucan's emphasis on the escalating fear resulting from the rumor (*Theb.* 4.369; Luc. 1.469, 484–6) and the overestimation of the invading army's progress (*Theb.* 4.370–3; Luc. 1.473–6). The tableau is capped by a close reworking of the vision of the frenzied *matrona* which concludes the first book of Lucan's epic (*Theb.* 4.377–405; Luc. 1.673–95).²⁵ In the *Thebaid*, the *matrona's* place is taken by the bacchant to whom she was compared in Lucan (*Theb.* 4.378–82; Luc. 1.674–5); both scenes are introduced by parallel statements of increasing anxiety (*Theb.* 4.377–8; Luc. 1.673–4), and the bacchant's cryptic description of the summative duel between Polynices and Eteocles closely mirrors the *matrona's* own description of the key events of Lucan's epic.²⁶ When Statius later writes of the advancing Argives beset by drought, *ceu flauam Libyen desertaque pulueris Afri / collustrent nullaue umbratam nube Syenen* ("it was as though they were scouring yellow Libya and the deserts of sandy Africa and Syene shaded over

24 For *amor mortis* in Lucan, see Rutz (1960) 462–73.

25 Ganiban (2007) 62–5.

26 For discussion, see Roche (2009b) 376–7.

by no cloud," *Theb.* 4.744–5), the natural point of reference for the reader is to the army of Cato, who do precisely this for much of Lucan's ninth book (esp. 9.498–618). So too at *Thebaid* 4.816–30 when the army's disordered consumption of the Langia's waters muddies its flow and even proves fatal for some of the army (821–3) they evoke the identical actions, the disarray, and the lethal consequences of Afranius' starving Pompeians in Spain (*Luc.* 4.366–70):²⁷ in both moments the absent positive exemplar is offered in Lucan's Cato, whose virtue is on display at various springs and rivers in Africa (*Luc.* 9.500–10: disdain to drink while the army is without water; 591–2: the last to drink when water is found; 607–18: drinking first only to prove the spring is potable).²⁸

In both poems the climactic battle is presented as an act of collective self-destruction willingly undertaken and even longed for by its ordinary participants in the rank and file. In Lucan, Pompey's forces at Pharsalus demand from him that he engage Caesar in battle, although this is contrary to his hitherto successful strategy of avoiding direct battle and disrupting Caesar's lines of supply. This desire is presented as a combination of the workings of a nefarious fate (*fatisque trahentibus orbem*, *Luc.* 7.46) and a collective madness (e.g., *dira subit rabies*, 51), and culminates in the outburst of the narrator that crime is being added to human error: *cladibus irruimus nocituraque poscimus arma; / in Pompeianis uotum est Pharsalia castris* ("we charge into disaster and demand weapons which will harm ourselves: in the Pompeian camp, Pharsalus is their prayer," 60–1). In *Thebaid* 8 the narrator invokes Calliope and Apollo in proemic style to introduce the final sequence of battle which will last until 11.579. He fashions this final movement towards battle thus: *fatalem populis ultro poscentibus horam / admouet atra dies, Stygiisque emissa tenebris* ("the black day brings to the people the fatal hour that they themselves demand," 8.375–6).

Statius brings over Lucan's increased attention to the paradoxical death.²⁹ As Eryx dies at *Thebaid* 9.130–1, his marveling (*miratur moriens*) at the spear protruding from his own mouth is, as it were, cut from the same cloth as Marius Gratidianus' own expelled eyes beholding his disfigured corpse as he is tortured (*Luc.* 2.184–5). As Eurytion pulls out his own left eye with the arrow which had struck him there and charges down his enemy (*Theb.* 9.749–52), he is similarly importing nuances from Scaeva's *aristeia* at Dyrrachium:³⁰

27 McNelis (2007) 87–8 adduces Nicander's *Alexipharmica* 104–5 and discusses the poetic symbolism of the pure river made turbulent.

28 Leigh (1997) 265–82; Sklenář (2003) 59–100.

29 On which, see Leigh (1997) 246–58.

30 Dewar (1991) 199: "a grisly improvement on Lucan's Scaeva."

Dictaea procul, ecce, manu Gortynis harundo
 tenditur in Scaeuam, quae uoto certior omni
 in caput atque oculi laeuum descendit in orbem.
 ille moras ferri neruorum et uincula rumpit
 affixam uellens oculo pendente sagittam
 intrepidus, telumque suo cum lumine calcat.

LUC. 6.214–19

Look, a Gortynian arrow is aimed at Scaeva from a distance by a Cretan hand; more certain than all prayer, it descends into his head and left eye-ball. He breaks all delay of iron and the ligaments of the muscles; undaunted, pulling out the arrow stuck to the eye hanging from it, he treads upon arrow together with his eye.

The fact that Eurytion is immediately blinded in the right eye by a second arrow and yet continues his charge in total blindness before tripping over the prostrate corpse of Idas (*Theb.* 9.752–56) also aligns him with a particular mode of paradoxical multiple mutilations met in Lucan. Consider the wounds suffered at Massilia by the unnamed twin who loses first his right hand, then his left hand, before acting as a human shield for his brother(s shield) and propelling himself, as missile, against an enemy ship (Luc. 3.609–26). Both Lucan and Statius likewise linger longer on the physical fate of the cadaver and the amputated limbs littering their battlefields.³¹ At *Thebaid* 9.259–60, amputated limbs and heads return downstream to their mutilated corpses. When the trumpeter Enyeus is killed at 11.50–6, Statius focuses on the detail of the hand pinned to the left ear and the conceit that the remaining air in the trumpet completed its call after the death of Enyeus. Earlier, Phegeus' amputated right arm—still gripping its sword—spasms so threateningly on the ground as to inspire fear and provoke a blow from Acoetes (8.441–4). In the aftermath of battle at 12.29–30, severed hands (apparently) holding sword hilts and eyes skewered through by arrows are prominent. Readers primed by Gratidianus' still palpitating tongue, which continues to move in mid-speech after it has been cut out (Luc. 2.181–2), will recognize the focus as one typical of Lucan: the push through pathos to somatic paradox is marked in both epics and is indicative of the concerns and narrative strategies of their authors. The post-mortem fate of the body, both collective and individual, is a natural extension in both authors of these concerns. Creon's injunction against burying the war

31 For attention to the dismembered body in imperial literature, see Most (1992); Dinter (2010) 175–90.

dead at *Thebaid* 12.94–103 revisits and applies themes and images from Lucan's Pharsalus and its aftermath, such as the notion of post-mortem sensation as punishment (*Theb.* 12.95–6; cf. Luc. 7.470–3 on Crastinus, hurler of the first lance at Pharsalus), and the notion that the earth will re-absorb the bodies of the civil-war dead into itself over time (*Theb.* 12.99; Luc. 7.810–11).³²

Statius extends Lucan's attention to the aftermath of war, especially paradoxes emerging from families mourning their dead and in the preparation of funerary rites.³³ In the aftermath of the sea-battle off the coast of Massilia, families lament on the shore:

coniunx saepe sui confusis uultibus unda
 credit ora uiri Romanum amplexa cadauer
 accensisque rogis miseri de corpore trunco
 certauere patres.

LUC. 3.758–61

Often a wife embraced a Roman corpse and believed the face to be that of her husband, because its features had been disfigured by the sea; and, with the pyres already lit, wretched fathers fought over a decapitated body.

Massiliote grief had been prefigured in Sulla's Rome by the families of the proscribed:

cum iam tabe fluunt confusaque tempore multo
 amisere notas, miserorum dextra parentum
 colligit et pauido subducit cognita furto.
 meque ipsum memini, caesi deformia fratris
 ora rogo cupidum uetitisque imponere flammis,
 omnia Sullanae lustrasse cadauera pacis
 perque omnis truncos, cum qua ceruice recisum
 conueniat, quaesisse, caput.

LUC. 2.166–73

When they were already dissolving in gore and had lost their distinguishing characteristics through the long lapse of time, the right hand of

32 For Creon and Caesar see Lovatt (1999) 133–6.

33 For the thematic importance of grief in the *Thebaid*, see, e.g., Pagan (2000); Markus (2004) 105–35.

wretched parents gather up and remove in fearful theft the parts they recognize. I remember how I myself, desiring to put the disfigured face of my butchered brother on the pyre and forbidden flames, went through all the corpses of the Sullan peace, and searched through all those truncated bodies for a neck to fit his severed head.

One might posit a (generically appropriate) double genealogy in epic and historiography for this typically Lucanian emphasis: *Iliad* 7.421–6, wherein the corpses of the slain warriors are hard to distinguish for those gathering them for burial;³⁴ and the confusion of enemy and allied corpses in the aftermath of battle at Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 61.8: *multi autem, qui e castris uisundi aut spoliandi gratia processerant, uoluentes hostilia cadauera amicum alii, pars hospitem aut cognatum reperiabant; fuere item qui inimicos suos cognoscerent* (“but many who had gone from the camp to look or to despoil the dead, when they turned over a hostile corpse found a friend, or a guest or a kinsman; some even recognized their enemies”).³⁵

Many of Lucan’s keynotes are amplified in scenes of Statian grief, such as those which follow the Theban ambush of Tydeus (*Theb.* 3.114–78) or the fratricide of Eteocles and Polynices (12.22–49).³⁶ Note the shared emphasis on the physical confusion of decaying corpses, especially resulting in inappropriate grief for a slain enemy: *prociduae super externosque suosque* (“[mothers] lying prostrate over their own and others’ sons,” 3.128); *saepe etiam hostiles . . . / decepti fleuere uiros; nec certa facultas / noscere quem miseri uitent calcentue cruorem* (“often, deceived, they even weep for enemy soldiers . . . nor do those wretches know for certain what blood to avoid or what to trample over,” 12.35–6). This confusion can result in disputes arising from confusion of victim identity: *circum informes truncos miserabile surgit / certamen qui iusta ferant, qui funera ducant* (“around disfigured trunks a pitiable dispute arose as to who would render due rites and who lead the funerals,” 12.33–4). Statius also privileges the confounding of body parts—*caesorum tantum ora uident alienaque iuxta / pectora* (“they see only the faces of the slaughtered men, lying next to other men’s bodies,” 12.25–6)—and the reassembling of corpses: *pars molliter aptant / brachia trunca loco et ceruicibus ora reponunt* (“some gently fit amputated arms in place and replace heads on necks,” 3.131–2).

34 Rabel (1997) 106; Griffin (1980) 103–43.

35 Perutelli (2004) discusses the more general influence of Sallust in Lucan’s aftermath scenes.

36 Micozzi (2004) 146–9.

Conclusion

At *Thebaid* 9.311–4 a soldier, “Pharsalus,” is killed while attempting to cross the river Ismenos: he is struck by a Doric spear, his horses are lost and he is swept away in the torrent. Let this moment stand in miniature as emblematic not only of the *Thebaid*'s quite literal containment of many of the leading themes and narrative strategies of the *De Bello Civili*, but also of its agonistic relationship with Lucan's epic—its poetic attempt to triumph over and subsume it. We can see aspects both of a detailed response and a competitive dynamic informing Statius' positioning of his epic as a successor to Lucan at various points in his narrative; in many of his allusions to Lucan in the *Thebaid*, these dimensions are presented in overtly self-conscious terms and made virtually explicit. One might cite as a final representative example of this dialogical relationship the manner in which the description of Polynices, on the point of fratricide, as the one *cui fortior ira nefasque / iustius* (“to whom anger is stronger and *nefas* is more just,” *Theb.* 11.541–2)³⁷ answers the unanswerable programmatic question posed by Lucan, *quis iustius induit arma / scire nefas* (“who more justly put on arms it is *nefas* to know,” *Luc.* 1.126–7). From its first word, the *Thebaid* foregrounds itself as a place to revisit, reconsider, and reconfigure the themes, characters, contested ideologies, emphases, and paradoxes with which Lucan was so concerned. Although there is no one place in the *Thebaid* where the narrator makes an explicit statement regarding his emulation of Lucan's epic, such as in his injunction to follow the *Aeneid* at the poem's conclusion, Statius was also self-consciously and creatively walking in the footsteps of the *De Bello Civili*.

37 Ganiban (2007) 190 discusses the oxymoron *nefasque iustius*.

Following after Valerius: Argonautic Imagery in the *Thebaid*

Helen Lovatt

At the end of the *Thebaid* (12.817), Statius instructs his poem to follow the *Aeneid*: the *Aeneid*, however, is not the only poem they are following. When he speaks of his ship coming in to harbor at 12.809, he uses the key Valerian word *ratis*.¹ If the *Iliad* is the fount of epic, the *Argonautica* is potentially an alternate current, a back-story for Homer, pre-cursor of the *Odyssey*, the Hellenistic epic, translated by Varro and refashioned in Valerius' Flavian epic.² This paper explores Statius' Argonautic maneuvers, with a particular emphasis on his use of Valerius Flaccus. It takes two similes at the beginning of book 8 (211–14 and 254–8) which make specific references to Argonautic figures, and asks what Statius is doing with them and why. From here, I move to a broader discussion of his interpretation and use of the Argonautic myth, his relationship with Valerius Flaccus and its contribution to his literary self-positioning, and the articulation of the structure of the *Thebaid*.

The relative dating of the two poems is no simple matter. In her survey of Valerian material in Statius' *Thebaid*, Parkes takes the line that the first half of the *Thebaid*, or books 3 to 6, at least, alludes to the first half of Valerius, based on internal evidence.³ Feeney also felt that “the works have an interrelationship which looks like a matter of reciprocal influence over a number of years rather than a one-way dependence.”⁴ Valerius Flaccus was certainly dead by the time Quintilian wrote *Inst.* 10.1.90, probably in the mid-90s, although Stover

1 *Et mea iam longo meruit ratis aequore portum* (“and now my ship has deserved harbour after a long voyage,” *Theb.* 12.809); cf. *fatidicemque ratem* (“the fate-telling ship,” V. Fl. 1.2). Noted by Malamud (1995) 22; Pollmann (2004) 284; Parkes (2014a) 785.

2 See Harrison (2007).

3 Parkes (2014a) 779. See also Parkes (2009b) and (2014b) on Valerius and the *Achilleid*. There is a certain irony in the fact that this chapter about two epics interacting with each other (perhaps overlapping) was written at the same time as Parkes' two contributions on the subject: apologies if I have not fully reflected these interactions.

4 Feeney (1991) 313.

has argued for an earlier, Vespasianic date.⁵ The assumptions behind the dating of the *Thebaid* include a literal interpretation of his statement at 12.811–12 that the poem took twelve years to write.⁶ Given that the dating of poetry is far from being an exact science, we can never be completely sure, but it seems to me that Statius is more Valerian than Valerius is Statian. Their shared engagement with Vergil, Ovid and Lucan does nothing to clarify the situation.⁷ This should not prevent us, however, from reading the points of contact between the two poems, and suggesting possible ways of making meaning from them.⁸

There is no doubt that the two texts have a great deal in common. The most obvious point of contact between the two is Statius' Hypsipyle narrative in book 5, a gratuitous diversion from the Theban way.⁹ Other major episodes of interaction include: necromancy (V. Fl. 1.730–826; *Theb.* 4.406–645); Tydeus' ambush by the Thebans (*Theb.* 2.482–743) and the Argonauts' accidental encounter with the Doliones (V. Fl. 3.14–272);¹⁰ prophetic interactions in *Thebaid* 3 (449–647) and at *Argonautica* 1.205–39 (Amphiarus and Melampus recall Mopsus and Idmon; Capaneus plays a similar role to Idas);¹¹ the boxing

5 Stover (2008) is mostly convincing, apart from his down-grading of Quintilian's *nuper* and his argument that the epic must have been finished only very shortly after the eruption of Vesuvius. Fucecchi (2007) 22 implies a more fluid relationship between the two epics. See also Smolenaars (1994) xvii; Zissos (2008) xiv–xvii.

6 Orthodox opinion sets it at 80–92: see Coleman (1998) xvii–xviii.

7 For instance, Parkes (2014b) 331–3 points to the way that both Statius (*Theb.* 2.563–4) and Valerius (3.65–7) allude to Ovid's battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs, along with Vergil's Nisus and Euryalus episode (glittering armour at V. Fl. 3.76, Stat. *Theb.* 2.530–2, Verg. *Aen.* 9.373–5). See also Parkes (2009a).

8 For a similar exhortation in the case of Statius and Silius, see Lovatt (2010b). Ripoll, pp. 425–43 in this volume, is more hopeful than I am that the nature and precise dating of poetic composition (and the relative chronological positioning of allusions) can be proved, and less hopeful than I am that we can find rewarding readings without that proof. He does, however, agree that the relationships between the poems deserve further consideration.

9 For this episode along with Valerius, see Aricò (1991); Gibson (2004) paired with Clare (2004). Gibson reads *Silvae* 2.7.77 (*qui per freta duxit Argonautas*, “the one who led the Argonauts through the seas”) as deliberately ambiguous between Varro and Valerius, writing both out of the commemorative process at the same time (149–53), and suggests that Hypsipyle is similarly designed to erase Valerius' version (166): “Statius is giving Hypsipyle another commemoration, as if Statius is already writing Valerius Flaccus' version of Hypsipyle out of literary history.”

10 Parkes (2014b).

11 See Fucecchi (2007) 25–9; Stover (2009) 445–53.

match (V. Fl. 4.199–343; *Theb.* 6.729–825).¹² There are also similarities between the house of Mars (*Theb.* 7.34–63) and the *ekphrasis* of the temple of the sun (V. Fl. 5.407–54; as well as Amycus' cave at 4.181–6),¹³ and the prophecy of Statius' Jupiter (*Theb.* 7.193–222) and that of Valerius' Jupiter (V. Fl. 1.503–60).¹⁴ Valerius' Medea is also potentially important for reading Statius' Antigone and Argia.¹⁵ There is a great deal more work to be done on this topic.

This chapter examines Statius' incorporation of Argonautic material into similes. The simile, like the *ekphrasis*, is a moment of intertextual privileging, when glimpses of other texts and paths not taken show through the fabric of the poem.¹⁶ It is a self-conscious bracketing of difference, important for readers of Statius because almost quintessentially epic. Similes evoke intertextual relationships in two ways: first, by echoing a simile or a series of previous similes in an earlier text or texts. Moments such as Vergil's comparison of Dido to Diana (and Aeneas to Apollo) evoke the *Odyssey* and Apollonius' *Argonautica* as much as their immediate referents.¹⁷ Secondly, similes can refer directly to the myth concerned (e.g., Dido as Pentheus or Orestes: *Aen.* 4.469–73). This latter technique is certainly common by the time of Valerius: Gärtner's list of mythological similes includes several examples.¹⁸

12 Lovatt (2005).

13 Smolenaars (1994) 22.

14 Smolenaars (1994) 74. Smaller moments: tiger killing in *Thebaid* 7 meets lion killing in *Argonautica* 3; the audience from the underworld at *Thebaid* 11.420–3, which picks up on Amycus' Tartarean audience at *Argonautica* 4.258–60; Tiresias refers to Medea at *Thebaid* 10.506.

15 On the first, see Lovatt (2006); on Medea and Argia, see Agri (2011).

16 Literature on similes: Wofford (1992) for a broad perspective; Nimis (1987); Harrison (2003). On Homer: Moulton (1977); Minchin (2001); Ready (2008); Scott (2009); Ready (2011). Hornsby (1970) aroused some hostility, i.e., a review by Sullivan (1972) 211: "This, I submit, is not exegesis but eisegesis, reading *into* a simile what is not there, instead of explaining what is there." On Vergil: West (1969); Harrison (1985). On Valerius: Fitch (1976); Gärtner (1994), with further bibliography. Some material on Statian similes can be found in Herschkowitz (1994) and Pollmann (2001); see also McNelis, pp. 189–204 and Dominik, pp. 266–90 in this volume.

17 Hardie (2006b); on incest and similes see Hardie (2004); Nelis (2001).

18 Gärtner (1994) 320–2 includes mythological exempla in her catalogue of similes. Her list shows the pervasiveness of this tactic in Valerius. For instance, when Jason waits for Medea in the grove (8.27–31), his beauty is compared to that of Endymion, suggestively recalling the speech of the Moon in Apollonius (4.57–64). The mythological exemplum is incorporated in a simile, making a tangential reference to Apollonius. Two examples of references to Ovid are Medea compared to Proserpina (*Met.* 5.345–9) and to Io (7.111–5).

The two similes I am interested in here come about fifty lines apart in the second part of *Thebaid* 8 (168–258), as part of the reaction to Amphiaraus' living *katabasis* at the end of book 7.¹⁹ Dis has reacted angrily, threatening to pollute the upper world with the events of the rest of the poem. We then move to the human response to Amphiaraus' death. In the Argive camp they are consumed by grief:

tantus ubique dolor. mensas alimentaque bello
debita nec pugnae suasit labor: omnia laudes,
Amphiaræ, tuas fecundaque pectora ueri
commemorant lacrimis, et per tentoria sermo
unus: abisse deos dilapsaque numina castris.

THEB. 8.169–73

Such great grief is everywhere. Neither the nourishment owed to war nor the work of fighting persuaded them to the tables: all things memorialize your praise, Amphiaraus, in their tears, and your heart fertile in truth, and there is one topic of speech through the tents: the gods have gone away and divine power has slipped from the camp.

After a substantial anonymous lament for Amphiaraus, this grief is compared to that felt by the Argonauts for their dead helmsman:²⁰

fracta dehinc cunctis auersaque pectora bello.
sic fortes Minyas subito cum funere Tiphys
destituit, non arma sequi, non ferre uidetur
remus aquas, ipsique minus iam ducere uenti.

THEB. 8.211–14

Then the hearts of all were broken and turned away from war. So when Tiphys abandoned the brave Minyæ with his sudden death, it seems that the weapons don't co-operate, the oar doesn't suffer the waters, and the winds themselves draw less.

¹⁹ See Fantham (2006) on Amphiaraus.

²⁰ Fucecchi (2007) 28 points out this link, but does not mention the other half of the pair, probably because he is looking at Amphiaraus. On lament in the *Aeneid* see Perkell (1997), and on lament in epic in general, Fantham (1999b).

In contrast the Thebans rejoice at their success in battle: they feast, drink and tell stories, culminating with a simile comparing their boasting to the triumphant tales of Dionysus returning from India (8.237–9). Now at last Oedipus emerges from his living death, rejoicing, not at Theban victory, but at the fact that war (and fratricide) is set on its course: the description of Oedipus finishes with a matching Argonautic simile, comparing him to Phineus:

inde epulae dulces ignotaque gaudia uultu.
 qualis post longae Phineus ieiunia poenae,
 nil stridere domi uolucresque ut sensit abactas
 (necdum tota fides), hilaris mensasque torosque
 nec turbata feris tractauit pocula pennis.

THEB. 8.254–8

Then the meal was sweet and unknown joy was in his face.
 Just as Phineus, after the hunger of long punishment,
 as he realized nothing screeched in his house and the birds were driven
 away
 (not yet is there complete belief), joyfully handled tables
 and couches, and goblets not overturned by wild wings.

The two halves of the reaction to Amphiaraus' death are both couched (and concluded) in Argonautic terms, with contrasting emotions forming the key point of contact between simile and narrative, the Argive grief matching the grief of the Argonauts at the death of Tiphys, while Theban joy, in particular the ghoulish pleasure of Oedipus, is equated to Phineus' rejoicing and relief.

Mourning for Tiphys

I start by showing how Statius draws on both the versions of Apollonius and Valerius in his reference to the death of Tiphys. The simile acts as a key to unlock broader thematic comparisons between the passages as a whole, and the movements of the wider narratives. Statius evokes Apollonius' description of the death of Tiphys in the despair and failure to do all the normal actions of warriors returning from battle at *Thebaid* 8.164–73, which is very similar to the despair of the Argonauts at Apollonius 2.858–63. This is a key moment of *amechanie*; like the grief-stricken Argives, they don't think about eating and drinking. Jason in particular suffers from despair (2.885–93), while Ancaeus and Peleus keep the expedition going. This is one of the many moments when

the Argonauts almost give up. In the *Thebaid*, in contrast, the Argives are not on their journey, but already at war; Statius extends the possibility of avoiding the poem's fratricidal *telos* right up to the last moment, and this simile plays with the idea of stopping. The *Thebaid* continually sets itself up as a narrative that should not be happening, giving a completely different flavor to the despair of the Argives.

Valerius splits the despair over the death of Tiphys (V. Fl. 5.1–72) into despair before he actually dies as well as Jason's despair afterwards on arrival at Colchis (5.297–328).²¹ His Argonauts recover in a few lines (63–71) from Tiphys' death, but as Tiphys lies ill and the Argonauts pray to Apollo, they are compared to children lamenting for a dying father (22–6). Idmon's death has already made them think of their own inevitable deaths (12); as Tiphys dies, they cling to him and it is as if the entire expedition is foundering in the sea (28–34). The pathetic fallacy of Statius' simile (8.212–14: the ship, the sea and winds seem now to be against them) is in Valerius represented as a straight psychological effect of despair: they feel like they are sunk.

We can feel secure that there is a relationship between Statius and Valerius here, not just Statius and Apollonius, when we take into account the anonymous lament for Amphiaras at *Thebaid* 8.174–207. It is similar in size and placing to Jason's lament for his two comrades in Valerius (5.37–53).²² Valerius begins in a Vergilian fashion with hostile divine powers (5.37–8; reminiscent of *Aen.* 1.8–11) and Statius, too, begins with the ingratitude of Apollo (8.175–6). At 5.42–3 Jason asks where Tiphys and Idmon are, and this question is Statius' first one (8.174–5). Jason's personal loss (he wonders how they will continue and who will guide the ship; 5.44–6) is amplified by Statius' lament at 8.177–81. A brief comparison with the Vergilian lament of Euryalus' mother (*Aen.* 9.481–97) shows quite different tropes at play ("you have abandoned me" and "I can't close your eyes"). Statius' lament is longer and has additional implications which I will explore briefly below, but there is a very significant similarity to Jason's lament for Tiphys.

We can therefore see Statius adapting both Apollonius and Valerius in this passage, mixing the two together. His intertextual games remain playful and ironic: the simile itself highlights an element absent from both previous versions, the idea that without Tiphys the ship and the weather seem to be against them. In fact, in both Apollonius and Valerius, the obstacle to progress is entirely psychological. When they finally set sail, the ship speeds

21 At Apollonius 3.167–93, Jason makes a speech to the other Argonauts, but there is no emphasis on despair.

22 As Fucecchi (2007) 29–30 observes.

through the waves with fair winds (Ap. Rhod. 2.899–903; V. Fl. 5.69–72, 101–6). Apollonius even goes so far as to compare the ship to a hawk soaring through the clear sky at 2.930–35. In the *Aeneid*, too, when Palinurus is dropped in the sea by Sleep, the weather is calm and the ship sails itself until Aeneas wakes up (*Aen.* 5.862–71).

The language of Statius' simile evokes metapoetic, and particularly epic, concerns. The final tricolon (*non arma sequi, non ferre uidetur / remus aquas, ipsique minus iam ducere uenti*, "it seems that the weapons don't co-operate, the oar doesn't suffer the waters, and the winds themselves draw less," *Theb.* 8.213–14) includes a self-referential word of seeming (*uidetur*), which may signal a metapoetic agenda.²³ The relationship of oar and water is reversed, so that the sea, which normally suffers (and bears) the ships, is instead rejected by the oar. Similarly, the word *ducere* seems counterintuitive: the wind propels the ship, but not by blowing, rather by magically drawing it (*OLD* 19b). *Ducere* can also have poetic connotations (*OLD* 23d).²⁴ The *arma* are used of the ship's tackle, allowing the phrase *non arma sequi* to suggest that the Argonauts will not be able to follow the epic path, echoing *ausa sequi* of Valerius' proem (1.3), and melding it with *arma uirum* (Verg. *Aen.* 1.1).²⁵ Is Statius commenting on Valerius' Vergilian tendencies, and correcting him by going back to Apollonius in his emphasis on despair? Or is he forging his own path in a Callimachean fashion?²⁶ The cosmos conspires against the journey, as against the forward progress of the poem.

Rejoicing with Phineus

The two Argonautic similes must be considered together. They are clearly linked and contrasted in Statius. Valerius Flaccus' Jason connects Phineus and Tiphys when he reacts to the death of Idmon, by remembering Phineus' prophecy (V. Fl. 5.5). By setting the two similes in close proximity, Statius creates complex effects of contrast and comparison.

23 Harrison (2003).

24 Poetic use of *ducere*: Hor. *Sat.* 1.10.44, Prop. 4.6.13, Ov. *Tr.* 1.11.18, Calp. Sic. *Ecl.* 4.80. *Deducere* is more clearly marked as Callimachean: Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.4, *Ep.* 2.1.225; Prop. 1.16.41; Ov. *Met.* 1.4; Stat. *Ach.* 1.7.

25 Where Valerius' *canimus* (1.1) also echoes Vergil's *cano* (*Aen.* 1.1).

26 On Statius and Callimachus, see McNelis (2007).

The most obvious connection between the Phineus simile and its context is the setting at a banquet and the theme of prophecy. It acts as a strong reversal: Phineus is the savior who is saved (he saves other suppliants, and the Argonauts by his prophecy, but he too is in need of salvation, which the Argonauts bring), while Oedipus is the destroyer who is destroyed (he has brought about the Theban war, hence is the destroyer of his own city and his own sons, and is himself in a state of living death, only to be brought down further in book 11, when he finally reacts in grief to the death of his sons and is sent into exile).²⁷ Parkes argues that Statius uses Argonautic figures to bring out the nefarious or honourable nature of his own characters.²⁸ In this case, both Phineus and Oedipus operate on the edge of the savior/destroyer paradigm in their tragic histories: alternative versions of Phineus blame him for putting aside his wife, even killing and/or blinding his children.²⁹ Oedipus at the beginning of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* is the savior of his city, which is evoked in the description of the sphinx's cliff in *Thebaid* 2.504–18; in his Statian role, like Phineus, he is both savior and destroyer, baleful influence and scapegoat. The dark side is much more clearly on display in Statius, while Valerius submerges and suppresses the negative side of Phineus, even more than Apollonius does. But the initial contrast set up between sympathetic Argives and unsympathetic Thebans is complicated by the fact that both Tiphys and Phineus are, as it were, on the side of the Argonauts. Just as Phineus is an outsider among both his own people and the Argonauts, so Oedipus is isolated and idiosyncratic in his reaction to the death of the Amphiaras. Elsewhere in the *Thebaid* Statius uses reference to the *Argonautica* to blur the two sides of the conflict. Tydeus, attacked on the way back from his embassy to Thebes in book 2, is like the Doliones accidentally attacked by the returning Argonauts. As Parkes convincingly points out, Statius again mixes up the two halves of the comparison, so that the traveling Tydeus becomes the innocent attacked, while Eteocles, who does not go anywhere, becomes the figurative version of Jason.³⁰ Similarly, Statius reverses who wins: here the innocent Tydeus massacres his attackers,

27 On Statius' Oedipus, see Ganiban (2007) 24–43.

28 Parkes (2014a) 783–4.

29 See Gantz (1993) 349–56 for tragic fragments and other early references to Phineus. Aesch. *Phineus* and Soph. *Phineus A*, *Tympanistai*, and *Phineus B* (probably), all fragmentary; Hes. *Ehoiai* frag. 157 M-W, *Megalai Ehoiai* frag. 254 M-W; Asclepiades, *FGrH* 12F31 (=schol. *ad* Hom. *Od.* 12.69); Diod. Sic. 4.43.3–44.4; Cyzicene Epigrams, *Anth. Pal.* 3.4; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.21, 3.15.3.

30 Parkes (2014b) 332.

becoming involuntarily guilty in the process. In the same way in this passage, the two similes produce an interplay of similarity and contrast, which leaves the reader quite unsure about who is civilized and who is barbaric.

Again the simile mixes Apollonian elements with moments from Valerius, showing engagement with both texts. The shriek of the birds (*nil stridere domi*, *Theb.* 8.256) is Apollonian (αἱ δ' ἄφαρ ἡύτ' ἄελλαι ἀδευκέες, ἧ στεροπαὶ ὧς / ἀπρόφατοι νεφέων ἐξάλμεναι ἐσσευοντο / κλαγγῇ μαιμώωσαι ἐδητύος, "the Harpies leapt down from the clouds without warning, like sudden storms or flashes of lightning, and attacked with a rush, screaming in their lust for food," 2.267–9). The squalid state of Oedipus at 8.243–4, 246–7 evokes the squalor of Phineus in Apollonius (τρέμε δ' ἄψα νισσομένοιο / ἀδρανίη γήραι τε· πίνω δέ οἱ αὐσταλέος χρώς / ἐσκήχει, ῥίνοι δέ σὺν ὅστέα μούνον ἔεργον, "his limbs shook with the feebleness of old age, his desiccated flesh was caked with filth; there was nothing behind his skin but bones," 2.199–201). Valerius' Phineus is much less squalid. Apollonius' Phineus, as in Statius' simile, delights in his food: σὺν δέ σφισι δαίνυντο Φινεὺς / ἀρπαλέως, οἶον τ' ἐν ὀνείρασι θυμὸν ἰαίνων ("Phineus dined with them—greedily, satisfying his desire as we do in dreams," 2.305–6). Valerian elements include the way that Phineus delights in touching the tables and other dining accoutrements (*Theb.* 8.257–8), and the words *dulces epulae* (8.254), which echo the vocabulary of Valerius' description: *tum uina toris epulasque reponunt. / ipse inter medios ceu dulcis imagine somni . . . et noua non pauidae miratur gaudia mensae* ("then they place again the wine and the feast at the couches. He himself in the middle, joyful as if in an image of sweet sleep . . . and wonders at the new rejoicing of un-terrified tables," 4.530–4).

In Statius' simile, Phineus' lack of belief (*necdum tota fides*, 8.257) draws on the idea in both Valerius and Apollonius of his happiness as dream-like, as if it will prove illusory and evanescent. Valerius makes more of this theme in Phineus' parting speech to the Argonauts: *exactae uerumne abiere uolucres? / nec metuum tutaeque dapes?* ("Are the birds really gone, driven away? And should I not fear for my safe meals?," 4.633–4). But Statius' use of the loaded word *fides* rather evokes Oedipus' betrayal of his city and his family. Nevertheless the idea of illusion brings out the illusory nature of his rejoicing. Just as temporary Theban success will lead to fratricide and ultimately defeat by Theseus, so Oedipus' joy in revenge will turn to grief.

Further Implications

These paired similes create a (typically dense and Statian) five-way comparison, between Amphiaras and Tiphys (as well as Idmon, whom Fucecchi calls

his alter ego), Amphiarus and Phineus, Oedipus and Phineus, Oedipus and Tiphys, and finally Oedipus and Amphiarus.³¹

Tiphys is literally in charge of finding the way, but Amphiarus gives moral and spiritual guidance.³² When Palinurus dies, Aeneas himself takes over (Verg. *Aen.* 5.868), but the question of who will guide the Theban expedition in the absence of Amphiarus is less easily answered. Amphiarus combines the functions of Phineus and Tiphys as prophet and (spiritual) helmsman. When Amphiarus is swallowed up by the earth at *Thebaid* 7.794–823, there is a simile comparing the earthquake interrupting battle to a storm during a sea battle (7.804–7).³³ His charioteering prowess makes him a figurative helmsman: during the chariot race, Polynices in his out of control chariot is compared to a helmsman who abandons the attempt to control his ship (6.450–3). In contrast, Amphiarus goes down to the underworld still holding onto the reins (7.819).

Amphiarus and Phineus share an obvious prophetic connection. Oedipus and Phineus share blindness as a punishment, and a problematic relationship with prophecy and the revelation of knowledge. They have both been excluded from social contact, and have been existing in a sort of living death. Both have strong associations with the poet/narrator: Oedipus starts off the whole narrative with his curse, while Apollonius' Phineus echoes the proem in his prophecy, and pre-duplicates the journey to come.³⁴ Both Oedipus and Phineus are suppressing the full story. Phineus' prophecy is not allowed to go beyond the Argonauts' arrival in Colchis; like Idmon, he suppresses the negative aspects of the "success" of the Argonautic mission, the tragedy in waiting. Oedipus is more immediately and ghoulishly deceptive, rejoicing in the imminent destruction of those around him, and particularly his own son, desiring the ultimate end of fratricide.

31 Fucecchi (2007) 27.

32 On the links between prophecy and navigation, see the chapter on the prophetic gaze in Lovatt (2013) 122–61.

33 But this simile seeps out into the narrative around it as the narrator and those fighting wonder whether the earthquake is actually a literal storm among the list of its possible competing causes (*sive omne fretum Neptunia mouit / cuspis et extremas grauius mare torsit in oras*, "or did Neptune's spear move all the sea and hurl a heavier ocean upon the fringing coasts?", *Theb.* 7.813–14). So the separation between simile and narrative is disrupted, along with that between earth and underworld.

34 On Apollonius' Phineus as poet figure, see Hunter (1993) 91; Cuypers (1997) 196–7; Clare (2002) 74. On Statius' Oedipus, see Ganiban (2007) 24–43.

Valerius Flaccus represents Tiphys as a father figure, and Oedipus is the *genitor sceleris* ("father of the crime," *Theb.* 11.580). Tiphys is compared to a father mourned by his children:

qualem praecipiti grauidum iam sorte parentem
natorum flet parua manus trepidique precantur,
duret ut inualidis et adhuc *genitoris* egenis:
haut aliter socii supremo in tempore Tiphyn
ante alios superesse uolunt.

V. FL. 5.22–6

Just as when a father is weighed down by a headlong disaster
the small band of children weep and pray in fear,
that he may endure since they are weak and still need their father:
not otherwise do the allies wish that Tiphys in his final moment
would survive above all others.

Tiphys is like a father to the Argonauts in their need for his help; Oedipus should be a father but instead of saving and helping his children, he curses them. The issue of succession is also important for Amphiaraus, who will be replaced by Thiodamas, son of his colleague/rival Melampus. Disrupted (or ineffective) succession is an important theme of the *Thebaid*, in which the whole war is a battle for succession, and Creon's grief for Menoeceus causes the repetitive second Theban war, waged by Theseus in order to bury the Argives.³⁵ Yet Oedipus' failure as father, guide, and source of authority, much like Jupiter's, is one of deliberate malignity. Just as Apollo in *Thebaid* 1 and 6 is a malignly creative poet figure, whose creations are monsters, so Oedipus both creates and destroys Polynices and Eteocles.

Oedipus and Amphiaraus have in common their negative view of the future and their ability to understand and accept what is going on while others remain in denial, and a connection with the underworld. Oedipus is mostly a negative of Amphiaraus, even if Amphiaraus himself is not entirely segregated from the ways of the Stasian world.³⁶ Amphiaraus has gone down to the underworld, a *katabasis* which results only in death for him, and further destruction in the rest of the poem, rather than knowledge, understanding, and narrative momentum. When Polynices and Eteocles finally kill each other,

35 See Bernstein (2008) 64–104.

36 For a discussion of his madness, see Lovatt (2001).

Oedipus' emergence from hatred into grief is figured as Charon breaking out of the underworld, an extraordinary simile, which makes concrete the underworld imagery associated with him throughout:

qualis si puppe relicta
exosus manes pigri sulcator Auerni
exeat ad superos solemque et pallida turbet
astra, nec ipse diu fortis patiensque superni
aeris; interea longum cessante magistro
crescat opus, totisque expectent saecula ripis:
talis init campum.

THEB. 11.587–93

Just as if with his ship abandoned
the ploughman of sluggish Avernus, filled with hate for the ghosts,
should come out to the upper world and upturn the sun and pale
stars, nor is he himself for a long time able to suffer the world above
with its strong breezes; meanwhile, the work grows long
while the master has stopped, and the ages wait along all the banks:
so he goes into the field.

The use of the word *opus* for Charon's work piling up strengthens once more the poetic overtones of the representation of Oedipus. The first lines of this passage, describing Oedipus' emergence, suggest that he too is breaking out: *profundis / erupit tenebris* ("he broke out from the deep shadows," 11.580–1). Similar imagery of disturbance and disorder is applied to Amphiaraus as he breaks into the underworld:

Vt subitus uates pallentibus incidit umbris
letiferasque domos orbisque arcana sepulti
rupit et armato turbauit funere manes,
horror habet cunctos.

THEB. 8.1–4

When suddenly the seer fell among the pale shades
and broke the death-bearing houses and the secret parts
of the buried world and threw the ghosts into disorder with his armed
corpse,
horror holds all.

What is the significance of this parallel imagery of breaking out and breaking in? Why are the Argonauts associated with both? The whole *Argonautica* has been read as a *katabasis*, with Colchis as the underworld, from which the fleece (and Medea) must be retrieved.³⁷ Valerius Flaccus is particularly concerned with boundaries and their breaking.³⁸ Both *Argonautica* and *Thebaid* can be, depending on how you read them, stories of divine vengeance and destruction: Hera may be bringing Medea back in order to punish Pelias (as is suggested in Apollonius), and Jupiter brews the Theban war to destroy both Thebes and Argos (his avowed motivation in *Thebaid* 1).

I have argued elsewhere that Amphiaraus is a poet-figure, and concerns with poetic succession and authority loom large in this passage.³⁹ For Statius the death of Amphiaraus is also a loss of poetic guidance: the anonymous lament (*Theb.* 8.174–207) shows that the whole expedition relied upon him, but also blurs the boundaries between speaker and narrator, narrator and poet himself. This is further compounded by substantial similarities between the lament and those in the *Silvae*, in Statius' own voice, for his own father and the poet Lucan, two poetic father figures, against whom he defines himself. The rhetoric of poetic failure, of the sources and places of inspiration drying up is already present in the prophetic failure of *Thebaid* 8: compare *Silvae* 5.3.1–9 and *Thebaid* 8.195–205, especially *arescere laurum* (*Silv.* 5.3.9) and *arescere laurus* (*Theb.* 8.203). Statius' father seems to have died before the epic was complete, and his guidance of the composition of the *Thebaid* is referred to in nautical terms: *te nostra magistro / Thebais* . . . ("with you as helmsman, my *Thebaid* . . .", *Silv.* 5.3.233–4).⁴⁰ Statius represents his father's death precisely as leaving his poetic expedition without a helmsman: *labat incerto mihi limite cursus / te sine, et orbatae caligant uela carinae* ("my journey slips with an uncertain path without you, and the sails of the bereaved ship grow dark," *Silv.* 5.3.237–8).⁴¹ *Silvae* 5.3.14–18 presents the figure of Calliope lamenting Orpheus, which links back to *Silvae* 2.7, the poem commemorating the birthday of the dead poet Lucan. At *Silvae* 2.7.98–104 Lucan plunges headlong into Lethe; this plunge is reminiscent of the death of Amphiaraus, plunging into the underworld. At *Thebaid* 8.189–94 the lamenter wonders what will happen to Amphiaraus in the underworld: will he return to earth, become part of the mechanics of the underworld, or end up in Elysium? This question is also asked at

37 Kyriakou (1995); Nelis (2001) 228–54.

38 Beverley Scott at the University of Liverpool is currently writing a Ph.D. on this topic.

39 Lovatt (2005) 23–40.

40 On the dating of *Silvae* 5.3, see Gibson (2006) 260–7.

41 See Gibson (2006) 358.

Silvae 2.7.107–19, when Statius wonders what will happen to Lucan in the after-life, and 5.3.19–28, where he offers his father alternative poetic careers after death, didactic or heroic, soaring through the firmament or hanging out with heroes. Amphiaraus as a figure of prophetic and poetic authority, self-sacrifice and futility, is particularly appropriate for Lucan, who prophesied the destruction of Rome, reluctantly fought against Nero, and died a futile death. There is no need to choose between these different readings: each works on a different level: and there is no reason why Amphiaraus cannot be a version of Lucan, Statius senior *and* Statius himself.⁴²

Poetic or prophetic duels are never far away: the doubling of Idmon and Mopsus in Valerius' *Argonautica* is picked up in the *Thebaid* by the competing negative prophecies of Amphiaraus and Melampus (3.499–546; the figure of Thiodamas, Melampus' son, who is eventually chosen to take over Amphiaraus' role, complicates the resonances still further).⁴³ Valerius' Phineus competes with Mopsus and Idmon, at least according to Jason; as he asks Phineus for a prophecy, Jason says Idmon and Mopsus are not enough for him (*nec uates sat iam mihi Mopsus et Idmon*, 4.546). In our main passage, the Thebans compare Tiresias and Amphiaraus as prophetic rivals. And as has been well discussed by Fucecchi, Amphiaraus himself tendentiously claims to be an Argonautic figure.⁴⁴

ille sub haec: "equidem uarii, pater, omina Phoebi
 saepe tuli: iam tum, prima cum pube uirentem
 semideos inter pinus nec Thessala reges
 duceret, his casus terraeque marisque canentem
 obstipuere duces, nec me uentura locuto
 saepius in dubiis auditus Iasoni Mopsus.
 sed similes non ante metus aut astra notau
 prodigiosa magis; quamquam maiora parantur."

THEB. 3.516–23

The other answered: "Often, my father, have I endured changeful
 Phoebus' omens. Even then, when in the green of first youth
 the Thessalian pine led me among royal demigods,

42 It is also possible, though never explicitly acknowledged, that Statius might be responding to the death of Valerius.

43 Stover (2009).

44 Fucecchi (2007) 25–9, though he argues rather that this trope of "poetic memory" is part of a Flavian attitude to myth.

the chiefs were amazed to hear me sing the chances
 of land and sea and Jason in doubt listened to me no less often
 than to Mopsus as I told of things to come.
 But never before have I observed terrors like these or heavens
 more prodigious. Yet greater things are being prepared.”

Amphiaraus here sets himself up as a rival to Mopsus, inserting himself tentatively into the Argonautic tradition, with classic Statian (or Flavian?) self-consciousness. At the same time Statius evokes the Roman tradition of the Argo as the first ship with the phrase *Thessala pinus*, which echoes Seneca, *Medea* 336 at the moment when everyone, from Tiphys to Orpheus to the Argo herself, is terrified into silence by the clashing rocks, just before Orpheus defeats the Sirens in a battle of songs. In the same way, Amphiaraus imagines the Argonauts silent at his narrative, no doubt amazed that he should be there at all, while Jason’s doubt might not be characteristic *amechanie*, but rather a self-conscious awareness that something has gone horribly wrong. Boundary breaking is also a poetic trope for originality.⁴⁵ Parkes has argued that the tangential way in which Statius engages with the Argonautic myth is designed to avoid the accusation of cliché, while leaving Valerius open to it.⁴⁶ The setting of these Argonautic similes in the context of poetic and prophetic competition gives his rivalry with Valerius distinctly more edge. All this builds up to an epic claim that insists the *Thebaid* trumps the *Argonautica*, becoming an *Aeneid* in waiting, an *Iliad* to the *Argonautica*’s *Odyssey*.⁴⁷

The tones of the two similes, which seem initially so different, on examination, work in more complex ways. The two similes can represent the two sides of a split poetic voice in Statius: the lamenting voice, which loathes the journey and can hardly bear to carry on, is exemplified in the Tiphys simile; the ghoulish joy in horror of the Oedipus simile is the other side, the part of the poetic voice which loves war for its own sake and cannot help identifying with Capaneus. Is Statius bringing Valerius into this to co-opt him into a Lucanian poetics of dissonance? If, with Stover, we agree that Valerius’ epic is a positive response to the new regime, and anti-Lucan, Statius seems to be doing his best

45 On Jason’s resourcelessness, see, for instance, Hunter (1993) 15–25.

46 Parkes (2014b) 329–30.

47 Another simile which seems to make a metaliterary point is Hypsipyle’s comparison of the Argonauts arriving at Lemnos to the gods mingling with mortals (5.422–30). This represents the Argonauts as heroes of a previous age, and evokes Catullus 64, perhaps both playing with mythic/literary time and pointing out Statius’ (or Hypsipyle’s) claim to neo-teric accomplishment.

to undo that, to re-make Valerius in his own image, to take him down to the underworld with him.⁴⁸

I finish with one further question: why book 8 for these striking Argonautic similes? The journey is over; the Argives are already at Thebes. One tentative answer is that book 8 is the book of Tydeus. Tydeus is one of Valerius' Argonauts (1.387, 3.103–7); Valerius' is the only *Argonautica* to include him in the list, whether because of his interest in the fathers of Iliadic heroes, or because Tydeus is a figure from the rival prequel to the *Iliad*, the *Thebaid*.⁴⁹ Statius plays mischievously with Tydeus' pseudo-Argonautic past elsewhere in book 8. We have already seen how Amphiaraus inserted himself into the crew; Tydeus is several times associated tangentially with people with Argonautic names. So at 3.394–406 Tydeus tells the story of his embassy and ambush to the horrified Argives, while a certain Epidaurian Idmon cleans his wounds.⁵⁰ Further, during Tydeus' *aristeia* in book 8, there is a cluster of warriors with Argonautic names: two Argives, killed by Acamas and Hypseus respectively, are named Iphis and Argus (both members of Valerius' crew) at 8.445–7; the next two sections are devoted to the deaths of Idas (8.466–73) and Butes (8.480–91), also Valerian Argonauts, at the hands of Tydeus and Haemon.⁵¹

My other tentative suggestion is that the Argonautic myth in Statius represents a way of reflecting on beginnings and endings, new departures. Parkes has set out the close engagement between book 4 of the *Thebaid* and book 1 of the *Argonautica*: not just the departing Argives as departing Argonauts, but also in the catalogue and the necromancy.⁵² Book 7 begins the Iliadic half

48 Stover (2012).

49 I suspect the former, as held by Zissos (2008) 262–3, who calls it “Iliadic prolepsis,” but Fucecchi (2007) 22–3 at least is prepared to suggest the latter.

50 Idmon in Apollonius comes from Argos (1.139–45); in Valerius Flaccus he is *Phoebeius*, and in both poets he is the son of Apollo.

51 There are four different characters called Idas in the *Thebaid*, which might argue against the Argonautic association. But Idas is a prominent Argonaut, as are the others, except Iphis, and none of them feature in Statius' catalogue of Argonauts at 5.431–44. However, the names of minor characters are often recycled between epics. Vergil uses Argonautic names as well as Homeric ones. Saunders (1940) counted 9 (or 10 if you include Caeneus) actual Argonauts in the *Aeneid*, and 12 relatives of Argonauts, 12 derived from places or characters related to the Argonautic myth, all Trojans (including Argus, Butes, and Idas). For the Latins there were only Idmon and Talos. In the *Thebaid* most of the Argonauts are unsurprisingly Argives, except for Onchestian Idas, who is a Theban. There is a similar distinction between the adventuring Argives and the defending Thebans, as there is between the mobile Trojans and the indigenous Latins in the *Aeneid*.

52 Parkes (2014a).

of the *Thebaid*, and is a book of arrival, looking to Valerius 1 and 5 (arrival in Colchis). But across the structure of two halves of six books runs a counter structure of three almost quartets, in which books 4, 8 and 12 form both ends and new beginnings. Book 8 is the end of the second quartet, but also a new beginning with Dis a new figure of the poet, creating his own proem. Similarly, book 12 is the end of the third quartet, and also a new beginning, self-contained and repeating in miniature the whole previous journey and war.

Conclusion

We have seen Statius engage with the *Argonautica* in various ways: he sets Apollonius and Valerius against each other, miniaturizes and comments on thematic intertextual play, enriches and complicates relationships of same and other, uses the Argonautic myth to articulate his own structure and, finally, sets up his own epic to end all epics as another Argonautic quest, just as it is an anti-*Aeneid*, a failed Odyssean *nostos* and the precursor to the *Iliad*.⁵³

53 This paper has been presented to various audiences in St. Andrews, Oxford, and London. Many thanks for hospitality and comments. Thank you, too, to Ruth Parkes and Tim Stover for sharing forthcoming publications.

Statius and Silius Italicus

François Ripoll

Since the problem of the “interrelations”¹ between Statius and Silius Italicus has been treated in a more or less scattered manner through many articles or commentaries,² the time has come to collect the evidence in order to provide an appraisal which could be used as a starting point for further investigations (whether one would reinforce or challenge the hypotheses I propose here).³ If we consider the question of Statius and Silius Italicus as a whole, we quickly come to realize that there are in fact three problems in one: first, the problem of personal relationship between these two poets, on which we have very little evidence (mostly drawn indirectly from the *Silvae*); secondly, the problem of relative dating, which has received much attention from the scholars but still remains partly controversial; thirdly, the problem of poetic imitation and literary borrowing, which depends widely on the stand we take on the previous issue. What I wish to show here is that, since the three problems are closely linked, it is no use to consider only a few selected texts separately from the other aspects of the question in the hope of drawing general conclusions: what we must search for is an array of corroborating clues, which can be reached only by taking into account all the elements of the problem and by relying on the principle of verisimilitude. So, I will consider these three questions simultaneously, first through the *Silvae*, then through the *Thebaid*, and then through the *Achilleid*.

Silvae

The *Silvae* provide a good starting point for our enquiry: given the specific nature of this poetry, there is little doubt that verbal or thematic similarities

1 I borrow this wording from Steele (1930).

2 See principally Helm (1892) 156–70; Legras (1905b); Lorenz (1968); Venini (1969a); Delarue (1990) 311–30; Dewar (1991) xxxi, xxxv; Smolenaars (1994) xvi–xviii; Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) 33–4; Lovatt (2010b).

3 Dominik (2010b) calls for an investigation of the influence of Statius’ *Thebaid* upon the *Punica*, though this does not need to imply that the influence was unidirectional.

between these poems and the *Punica*, if they are significant enough, are the result of an imitation, probably allusive, of Silius by Statius rather than the contrary.⁴ In fact, the problem of the relationship between Statius and Silius through the *Silvae* has been summed up by Delarue in an unpublished part of his doctoral thesis.⁵ This scholar retains four plausible allusions to Silius in the poems of Statius, all of them written after 90 CE if we follow the dating of Frère.⁶

In *Silvae* 3.3.188–91 (probably written in the early 93 CE), Aeneas and Lausus frame the *tener Scipio*, the three being mentioned as *exempla* of filial *pietas*.⁷ Since the rescue of his father by the younger Scipio was treated at length in *Punica* 4.425–77,⁸ with precisely the epithet of *tener* applied to Scipio's hand (4.425), we may infer that Statius wants to put the hero of Silius' poem on the same level as the two heroes of Vergil, whom the author of the *Punica* tried to emulate. It is difficult not to read this as a homage from Statius to Silius.

In *Silvae* 4.6.75–84, Statius mentions Hannibal among the previous owners of the statue of Hercules now belonging to Novius Vindex. The hypothesis of an allusion to Silius' *Punica* is based mainly on two elements: the image of Hannibal threatening Rome with arson (cf. Sil. 12.699–700), and, more convincingly, the stress laid upon the end of Saguntum (the city dear to Hercules' heart), which had received an extensive treatment in *Punica* 2.455–707; particularly noticeable, here, is the oxymoron (*furias . . . honestas*), which is very much in the manner of Silius (cf. 2.614, 632, 650).⁹

Delarue quotes, thirdly, the poem about the Via Domitiana (*Silv.* 4.3), where Statius refers to the invasion of Hannibal into Campania (4–6), and introduces a comparison between the river Volturnus and the rivers Bagrada and Liris (90–4), which were not obvious comparanda: he could have taken other examples as well. Consequently, we may think of a special reason for these specific allusions, which could be the intention of paying homage to the *Punica*.

The fourth example is both more convincing and more controversial. In *Silvae* 4.7.15–16, the description of the miner as *concolor auro* is a quasi-quotation

4 There is a small controversy about Sil. 8.209 and *Silv.* 3.5.2: A. Hardie (1983) 153–4 sees an allusion of Statius to Silius, whereas Littlewood (2011) lvii proposes the inverse process, but says nothing to justify this unorthodox point of view. At the most, we might say that the case remains uncertain.

5 Delarue (1990) 319–24.

6 Frère and Izaac (1961) ix–xxi.

7 Citations of the *Silvae* are from Frère and Izaac (1961); of the *Thebaid* from Shackleton Bailey (2003); of the *Achilleid* from Ripoll and Soubiran (2008).

8 Liv. 21.6.7–8 is more concise on the subject.

9 For other arguments in the same manner, see also Littlewood (2011) lix.

from *Punica* 1.231–3. Delarue, who finds the image ridiculous, argues that Statius' allusion to Silius is ironical; he then strains to make this suggestion compatible with the idea of a very friendly relationship between the two men (and more than that, with Statius' overall concern to please Silius in order to develop his social connections). Of course, Silius could have been cool enough not to have been offended by this kind of irony. But for my part, I would leave to Delarue the responsibility for this quite subjective hypothesis, since we could certainly pick from Statius other images which would offend our aesthetic taste today.

Statius and Silius probably met in Campania at the latest about 95 CE, when Silius retired there permanently, as Statius used to divide his time between Naples and Rome (cf. *Silv.* 3.5); but each of them could have known some parts of the other's works before that. The two men must have met more particularly by the tomb of Vergil, which Silius had bought and restored, since both of them shared the same quasi-religious devotion to the memory of Maro (cf. *Silv.* 4.4.54–5, *Plin. Ep.* 3.7.8, *Mart.* 11.48.50), and Statius might have been invited sometimes to Silius' villa (cf. *Plin. Ep.* 3.7.4). The fact that there is no poem in the *Silvae* specifically dedicated to Silius is not a mark of a lack of sympathy (nor a sign of an aesthetic reticence towards Silius' poetry):¹⁰ the *argumentum a silentio* cannot be taken as a proof of reluctance, and the practice of allusion to the *Punica* in the *Silvae* bears in itself the value of an indirect homage,¹¹ which both poets might have found sufficient. But on the other hand, this absence of a direct homage to Silius speaks against the idea of a very close relationship between the two men (who, anyway, were not old friends, nor of equal rank); so, we may hardly imagine them as two fellow-poets working together and comparing their works all the way through the composition of their respective poems.

Thebaid

Let us come now to the *Thebaid* and the *Punica*, which form the most difficult part of the problem, since one cannot elude here the discussion about relative dating. The main difficulty does not come from the *Thebaid*, which

10 Even if Statius shared, deep down, the critical opinion of Pliny (*Ep.* 3.7.5) towards the poetry of Silius as a whole, one may think that he was tactful enough not to let his feelings appear. Besides, the way he uses the *Punica* suggests that there were at least some parts of this work which he judged worthy of interest.

11 On this, see Guillemin (1929) 30, quoting *Plin. Ep.* 9.11.1.

seems to have been composed in 80–92 CE, and probably following the order of the books,¹² but from the *Punica*, since we have fewer clues about it. The most widely accepted opinion, based on the study of Wistrand,¹³ is that the *Punica* was composed between 80 and 98 CE,¹⁴ also following the order of the books.¹⁵ Statius could have known the earlier books of the *Punica* from a partial publication about 92 (cf. Mart. 7.63), but it is not clear whether Silius might have attended *recitationes* of some parts of the *Thebaid* before its complete publication in 92: we shall see that no serious evidence points in this direction.

Silius from Statius

I will firstly examine the plausible borrowings by Silius from Statius. According to Venini,¹⁶ the first opportunity for comparing Statius and Silius occurs in the passage where Tydeus devours the head of Melanippus (*Theb.* 8.757–66), which bears some similarity to the one of Laevinus and Tyres at Trasimene (Sil. 6.41–53). But since the latter episode has a historical basis (Liv. 22.51.9), and the former a mythological one (cf. Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8), and the similarities of expression may be explained by the analogous situations, it is not certain that one of the two poets drew his inspiration from the other; that is why Delarue excludes this example from his list of parallels.

The second comparison is more significant. The episode of *Hannibal ad portas* (Sil. 12.558–762) may be compared with the assault of Capaneus against the walls of Thebes (*Theb.* 10.827–939). The supernatural dimension added to the historical episode¹⁷ by Silius (comparison with the Titans, challenge to Jupiter, sending of a thunderbolt on to the impious attacker) and the similarity

12 That is what we may infer from the fact that the *Achilleid* was left unfinished at book 2 when Statius died.

13 Wistrand (1956).

14 See notably Laudizi (1989) 29–54 and Augoustakis (2010c) 3–11.

15 Some scholars are over-skeptical about this way of composing, which seems to have been the one of Statius and Lucan, at least, and possibly of Valerius Flaccus; on this, see Delarue (1992) 152. The few clues we can find inside the *Punica* point also in that direction: book 14 (with its allusion to the affair of Baebius Massa in 93 CE) was probably written after book 3 (for which 84 CE is the most credible dating on the basis of historical allusions), and perhaps also after book 13 (since the allusion to the punishment of the Great Vestal Cornelia allows a dating not very far from 89 CE). The notable exception of Vergil is too isolated to tip the scales of the general verisimilitude on to the other side.

16 Venini (1969a) 779.

17 The main source is Liv. 26.11.

of *color* indicate that Silius has Statius in mind. There are also some textual parallels, like this particularly obvious one:¹⁸

concussi tremuere poli, caelumque tenebris
clauditur.

SIL. 12.612–13

The firmament was struck and trembled; darkness veiled the sky.

coeperat Ogygiae supra fastigia turris
arcanum mugire polus caelumque tenebris
auferri.

THEB. 10.921–3

Above the summit of the Ogygian tower the firmament began secretly to rumble and the sky to withdraw in darkness.

But we may also quote this echo, in the aftermath of the two episodes at the beginning of the following book:

ante oculos irati pugna Tonantis.

SIL. 13.20

The Thunder-god, the wrathful champion of Rome, was still before their eyes.

omnibus ante oculos irae Iouis.

THEB. 11.23

All have the wrath of Jove before their eyes.

In this case, the anteriority of Statius is indeed more plausible than the one of Silius, since the former did nothing else but magnify what he found in his sources,¹⁹ whereas the latter introduced some elements which he did not find in his own sources, and which could have derived from Statius. And it is quite natural to imagine that Silius, who was always eager to impart a mythical

18 I generally quote the translations of Shackleton Bailey (2003) for Statius, and Duff (1934) for Silius, sometimes slightly modified.

19 Notably Eur. *Suppl.* 496–9.

dimension to his historical-epic narrative (especially through the motif of Titanism), had thought, at the time he was writing the episode of Hannibal against Rome, of this famous mythological episode of the assault of Capaneus against Thebes as treated by Statius, especially if the *Thebaid* had recently been published, in 92 CE (which reinforces the idea of *Punica* 12 being written about that time).²⁰

In his commentary on *Thebaid* 7, Smolenaars,²¹ taking up the datings of Wistrand, Juhnke, and Dewar, adds what he considers to be an imitation of *Punica* 5.611–28 in *Thebaid* 7.794–823 (the depiction of an earthquake). There are indeed many similarities, but since both Flavian poets were directly influenced by Seneca, *Troades* 170–99,²² it is very difficult to demonstrate, only on the basis of the texts, the anteriority of the one or the other. So, although I am inclined to agree with Smolenaars, I will not press the point on this example.²³

I would be less reserved about the hypothesis of an influence of Statius on Silius through the character of Podaetus in *Punica* 14.492–515. This secondary character does indeed bear a specific resemblance, among other *Heldenknabe* of the epic tradition,²⁴ to Statius' Parthenopaeus, as Sanna has shown.²⁵ Not only the thematic similarities, but also the textual parallels are striking, most notably:

a rudis armorum, tantum noua gloria suadet!

THEB. 4.247

A novice in arms, alas: so potent the love of untasted glory!

heu puero malesuada rudi noua gloria pugnae!

SIL. 14.501

But, alas, the novice was tempted to ruin by his love of untasted glory!

20 And fits well with the hypothesis that the *Punica* was composed at the approximate rate of one book per year from 89 CE.

21 Smolenaars (1994) xvii–xviii.

22 For the detail, see Smolenaars (1994) 377–8.

23 For the same problem (even more intricate) with *Theb.* 7. 632–9 and *Sil.* 7. 667–79, see Smolenaars (1996).

24 See notably Schetter (1960) 43–8 and La Penna (1996).

25 Sanna (2004). See also Dewar (1991) xxxv.

Another significant parallel is the juxtaposition *arma puer* in both passages (*Theb.* 9.892 and *Sil.* 14.496).

There is little doubt here that Silius is the imitator, since Statius' depiction of the character of Parthenopaeus is so personal and successful throughout all the *Thebaid* that it might have been a particularly appealing model for another poet striving to draw, in a limited episode, a typical ephebic figure of his own. Hence the concentration in the Silian character of features borrowed from different passages of the *Thebaid* about Parthenopaeus.²⁶ I would go so far as to speak here of an allusive homage by Silius to Statius, and to infer that *Punica* 14 was written after *Thebaid* 9 (and, more precisely, after the publication of the *Thebaid* in 92 CE).

I have kept for the end the funeral games of *Thebaid* 6 and *Punica* 16. The majority opinion that Silius comes after Statius has been recently challenged by Lovatt, who, in a stimulating but controversial chapter,²⁷ suggests that we might detect some evidence for a kind of reciprocal interplay throughout the two narratives, leading to the idea that the two books could have been written exactly at the same time. For my part, what I would question here is not the general idea, well exemplified in some cases, that the interplay between the two poets might be competitive and creative, but the specific hypothesis of a simultaneous interplay between them all the way through the composition of *Thebaid* 6 and *Punica* 16, and the consequences for the relative dating of these books. First, the criterion chosen by Lovatt to determine who comes first in each case ("we should look for readings which offer the most interesting story")²⁸ seems to me quite dangerous, since it leads more or less to giving free rein to the imagination of scholars; for my part, I consider as a better method to weigh up carefully the plausibilities when there is no definite proof and to give priority to the criterion of the strongest verisimilitude. Secondly, if we scrutinize one by one all the arguments of Lovatt in favor of the possible anteriority of Silius (which would be too long to be done here), we must admit

26 There might be also, in the delineation of Podaetus' character, an influence of the *mythological figure* of Achilles, as Risi (2010) has suggested. But unlike Risi, I would not go so far as to see a specific influence of the *Achilleid* here, since most of the similarities quoted by this scholar between Silius' Podaetus and Statius' Achilles concern features which are already present in Statius' Parthenopaeus or in other antecedents, and there is no close parallel of expression between the *Achilleid* and the *Punica* (only a few isolated words can be picked up, sometimes in quite different contexts, which is not significant). I would rather speak here of a convergence of ideas, as in the case of Silius' Scipio and Statius' Achilles: on this, see my note on *Achil.* 2.138 in Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) 301–2.

27 Lovatt (2010b).

28 Lovatt (2010b) 158.

that they are objectively weaker than the ones in favor of the anteriority of Statius, so that the traditional thesis remains, in my opinion, the most convincing one.

The plausibility of Silius having Statius' games in mind when writing his book 16 relies particularly on two well-studied examples. First, the sword fight of the Spanish brothers (Sil. 16.527–56), although having a historical basis (Liv. 28.21.6–10), is obviously influenced by the duel of Eteocles and Polynices at the end of *Thebaid* 11,²⁹ both in general and in the detail.³⁰ The most likely hypothesis is that Silius re-wrote the historical anecdote about the Spanish cousins he had found in Livy in such a way as to make it look more like the fate of the Theban brothers.³¹ This allows us to speak of an allusive intention, bearing the value of a homage to a famous scene which is the climax of the *Thebaid*.³²

Second, in the episodes where a runner pulls a competitor's hair in order to slow him down (Sil. 16.517–23 and *Theb.* 6.614–17), we may also speak of an allusive strategy, perhaps with a touch of criticism at this time, since Silius seems to be “correcting” a slight incoherence of Statius³³ (which precisely allows us to think that Silius comes after Statius).³⁴

29 Compare also *Theb.* 12.429–6 and Sil. 16.546–8 (the funeral pyre with the division of the flame).

30 See Venini (1969a) 780–1 and Delarue (1990) 315–16.

31 However, Lovatt (2010b) 161 tried to challenge the traditional interpretation by an *argumentum a silentio*, suggesting that Statius, coming after Silius, might have “erased” the sword fight from his own games in order to criticize the insertion of such an episode in Silius'. I let the reader free to determine which hypothesis seems more likely.

32 The attempt of Lovatt (2010b) 161 to suggest that Silius intends to criticize Statius seems to me quite unconvincing, since miniaturization in ancient literature does not necessarily mean devaluation.

33 Commentators generally reproach Statius with having implied that a runner could pass another one simply by pulling his hair, which would instead permit a third runner to pass the other two (and that is precisely what happens in Sil. 16). For my part, I am not sure that Statius is as incoherent as critics generally assume: we must perhaps imagine that Idas, by pulling Parthenopaeus' hair, does not only slow him down, but makes him also lose his balance and fall down, so that he can pass him (even if this suggestion remains quite implicit). Silius' version might be more a *uariatio* than a “logical” correction. But he might also have found Statius insufficiently clear anyway. One must bear in mind that Silius is often inclined to combine imitation with clarification.

34 We might speak, in this case, of a sort of “critical homage,” since the correction of a purely technical detail does not preclude an admiration of Silius towards the kind of “trick” invented by Statius.

There are other similarities, but it is more difficult to determine, only on the basis of the texts, which poet comes first. For instance, the mention of the breathing of the competitors in the running race of Statius (6.614–17) and the horse race of Silius (16.420–2) are quite similar, especially in the detail of the expression:³⁵ the transposition might have functioned in one sense or the other. The same doubt may exist for *Punica* 16.480–1 and *Thebaid* 6.596–601,³⁶ as well as for *Punica* 16.325–7 and *Thebaid* 6.411–15.³⁷ As far as *Punica* 16.350–3 and *Thebaid* 6.843–6 (contaminated with *Theb.* 1.414–17) are concerned, I have nothing to add to the demonstration of Lovatt,³⁸ who admits that the anteriority of Statius is most plausible.³⁹

We should add to that list, outside of the funeral games, the episode of the aborted sacrifice made by Syphax in *Punica* 16.263–74,⁴⁰ which bears an interesting similarity to the one of Eteocles in *Thebaid* 11.226–39⁴¹ (the same omens in the inverse order). The ominous function of the scene is quite similar (to prefigure the fall of an untrustworthy king), but it is far more important in the *Thebaid*, since it prefigures the fate of one of the two main protagonists and the climax of the epic, whereas Syphax is only a secondary character in the *Punica*: as in the case of Parthenopaeus and Podaetus, a limited borrowing of Silius from a successful invention of Statius in order to enhance a minor figure is most likely.⁴²

To sum up, whereas in most cases, the anteriority of one or the other of the two poets is quite uncertain if we consider nothing but the texts, at least two examples, the sword fight of the brothers and the trick in the running, are, in

35 See Delarue (1990) 316.

36 Lovatt (2010b) 165–6 admits here that both hypotheses are plausible.

37 Lovatt's suggestion of the possible anteriority of Statius (2010b [171–2]) has a very weak basis. As regards the overall structure of the race, it is, *pace* Lovatt (2010b) 172–3, unnecessary to suggest a direct influence of the one on the other. The same remark applies to Sil. 6.389–93 and 426–30 compared with *Theb.* 6.460–8, on which Lovatt's "parodic" hypothesis (2010b [173–4]) seems to me rather gratuitous.

38 Lovatt (2010b) 169–170.

39 See also her interesting discussion of Sil. 16.318–24 (Lovatt [2010b] 170–1).

40 With no attested historical source.

41 For the epic intertexts, see Venini (1970) 69.

42 If we strive to offer "the most interesting story," as Lovatt suggests, we may suppose that Silius expected his readers to have read the *Thebaid*, so that the allusion to Statius' Eteocles might darken by anticipation the image of Syphax, who has not yet betrayed his alliance with Rome (which implies that the *Thebaid* was entirely published at that time ...). But it remains quite hypothetical.

my opinion, convincing enough to tip the scales of verisimilitude, and to make us believe that the whole of *Punica* 16 was written after *Thebaid* 6, and, most probably, after the overall publication of the *Thebaid*.

Statius from Silius

Let us turn now to the most plausible borrowings by Statius from Silius.⁴³ Dewar,⁴⁴ following Legras,⁴⁵ has noticed many similarities between the river-battles of *Thebaid* 9.225–521 and *Punica* 4.573–697. The anteriority of Silius is plausible here, since no battle of Hippomedon against Ismenos seems to have been mentioned in the sources of the *Thebaid*, whereas the historical battle of the Trebia could naturally have inspired in Silius the idea of rewriting the famous Homeric episode of *Iliad* 21.1–382. So we may suppose that Statius handled this motif with a desire both to emulate Homer and to surpass Silius (with the help of Luc. 3.509–762): Dewar compares in this “competitive” perspective the catalogues of horrifying deaths in *Thebaid* 9.266–73 and *Punica* 4.585–7. If this suggestion is sound, it implies that *Punica* 4 was written before *Thebaid* 9, and that Statius has known it through a partial publication or a *recitatio* about the middle of the 80s.⁴⁶

But the most convincing piece of evidence in this part of the argument is the comparison between the fall of Saguntum in *Punica* 2 on the one side, and the *deuotio* of Menoeceus and the duel of the Theban brothers in *Thebaid* 10 and 11 on the other. The treatment of these episodes in the *Thebaid* is so original, with the interventions (unattested elsewhere) of Virtus personified beside Menoeceus (*Theb.* 10.632–73) and of Pietas against Tisiphone (11.457–96), that we cannot help asking whence Statius could have drawn his inspiration. In fact, as Venini and Delarue have shown, there are many similarities, both general and textual,⁴⁷ between the interventions of these personified abstractions

43 Like Delarue, I leave aside some less convincing parallels quoted by Legras (1905b) and Bruere (1952): for instance, Sil. 6.164–65 and *Theb.* 5.516–17, where the similarity of topic explains the analogies of expression without making the hypothesis of a mutual influence necessary.

44 Dewar (1991) xxxi.

45 Legras (1905b) 366–8; see also Juhnke (1972) 27 n. 58, 30 n. 70, 37 n. 85, 39 n. 90.

46 Some critics assign to Sil. 4 and *Theb.* 9 respectively the dates of 84 and 89, which is perhaps making too much of the hypothesis of one book by year, but yet remains possible.

47 For the details, see Venini (1970) 122–31; Delarue (1990) 318.

and those of Fides⁴⁸ and Tisiphone in *Punica* 2.475–707. For instance, both Fides and Pietas are situated in a remote part of the sky:⁴⁹

arcanis dea laeta polo tum forte remoto
caelicolum magnas uoluebat conscia curas.

SIL. 2.481–2

It chanced that the goddess, who loves solitude, was then in a distant region of heaven, pondering in her heart the high concerns of the gods.

iamdudum terris coetuque offensa deorum
auersa caeli Pietas in parte sedebat.

THEB. 11.457–8

Long time had Piety been sitting in a secluded part of heaven, offended by earth and the company of the gods.

And the action of Fides upon the souls of the Saguntines sounds very much like the one of Virtus upon Menoeceus:

tum, fusa medullis,
implicat atque sui flagrantem inspirat amorem.

SIL. 2.516–17

Then, piercing even to their marrow, she filled them with a burning passion for herself.

sic ait, et magna cunctantis pectora dextra
permulsit tacite seseque in corde reliquit.

.....

48 This intervention may be considered as a pure invention of Silius; since *fides* is a central value in the *Punica* (see von Albrecht [1964] 55–86), her apparition as a personification at this crucial moment is quite “natural” and need not have been inspired by any direct model. The intervention of Virtus in *Theb.* 10 is more unexpected (and perhaps more awkward in the detail).

49 In the case of Fides, her remote location must result from the analogy with the Homeric Zeus in *Il.* 1.498, but seems quite loosely motivated; Statius remotivates this detail by alluding to the legendary flight of the virtues offended by the immorality of men in the myth of the Iron Age, so as to provide a moral explanation in keeping with the mood of the poem. This is another example of creative interplay.

iuuenis multo possessus numine pectus
erexit sensus letique inuasit amorem.

THEB. 10.672–7

So she speaks, and as he hesitates, silently strokes his breast with her great hand and leaves herself in his heart. . . . The youth, overwhelmed by supernatural power, exalted his spirit and rushed on passion for death.

There is little doubt here that Statius has tried to emulate⁵⁰ what is perhaps one of the most remarkable episodes of the *Punica*, and to which, later on, he paid another tribute in *Silvae* 4.6.82–4, as we saw above. It confirms that the first books of the *Punica* were probably known to the public in the late 80s.

Achilleid

I will now focus on the *Achilleid*, which has been less scrutinized by scholars.⁵¹ Since the anteriority of the major part of the *Punica* may, at this time, be taken more or less for granted⁵² (except for the last books), I will study, first, the most evident reminiscences of the *Punica* in the *Achilleid*, before asking whether we may find some evidence for the use of Statius' last epic by Silius.⁵³

Statius from Silius

The first evident borrowing of Statius from Silius that I wish to examine is the double simile of *Achilleid* 1.554–7, where the assembly of the Achaeans breaking up after the speeches of Ulysses and Agamemnon is compared with birds coming back to their nests at dawn and to Hyblean bees returning home with their loads of honey:

50 We may note the intensification in pathos from *sui . . . amorem* to *letique . . . amorem* in Statius.

51 In his index, Dilke (1954) notes only two parallels (*Achil.* 1.435 and *Sil.* 7.344; *Achil.* 1.555–7 and *Sil.* 2.215–21). Méheust (1971) xxix does not even mention Silius among the minor models of Statius.

52 The *Achilleid* was written in 95–96 CE. However, Littlewood (2011) lvii quotes two examples of what she considers imitations of Statius by Silius: the image of Paris gazing upon Venus' beauty (*Achil.* 2.54 and *Sil.* 7.470–1) and the allusion to the Jovian filiation of Scipio and Achilles (at the end of *Sil.* 17 and the beginning of *Achil.* 1). In both cases, anyway, the similarities are quite vague (although I partially reevaluate the first one below), and no argument is brought to support the anteriority of Statius.

53 I rely mainly, here, on the notes I have written in Ripoll and Soubiran (2008).

laxantur coetus, resolutaque murmure laeto
 agmina discedunt, quales iam nocte propinqua
 e pastu referuntur aues, uel in antra reuerti
 melle nouo grauidas mitis uidet Hybla cateruas.

ACHIL. 1.554–7

The gathering dissolves and the troops disperse and depart, joyfully murmuring; as when at nightfall the birds come back from pasture or mild Hybla sees her swarms return to their grotto laden with new honey.

Silius is obviously the main intertext:

sicut agit leuibus per sera crepuscula pennis
 e pastu uolucres ad nota cubilia uesper;
 aut, ubi Cecropius formidine nubis aequosae
 sparsa super flores examina tollit Hymettos,
 ad dulcis ceras et odori corticis antra
 mellis apes grauidae properant densoque uolatu
 raucum connexae glomerant ad limina murmur.

SIL. 2.215–21

So, in the late twilight, evening sends the birds on their light wings back from their feeding-ground to their familiar roosts; or so, when Cecropian Hymettus scares with menace of a rain-cloud the swarms scattered over the flowers, the bees, heavy with honey, hasten back to their luscious combs and hives of fragrant cork; they fly in a close pack, and unite in a deep humming noise outside the hives.

The verbal similarities are quite striking, but the investigation of the mental process of reminiscence is what is most interesting here.

Throughout this entire episode (*Achil.* 1.397–59), Statius had clearly in mind, from a very general point of view, the second book of the *Iliad*,⁵⁴ where the situation is quite similar: here too we have, especially on the Greek side, assemblies and speeches before the battle and warlike preparations and catalogues; the mood of the Statian passage is thus conspicuously Homeric. In *Iliad* 2, we can precisely find several similes applied to movements of crowds: the double meteorological simile of 142–52 (the reactions of the assembly after the exhortation of Agamemnon), the double animal simile of 469–73 (the gathering

54 Contaminated, from a more particular point of view, with the *Doloneia* of *Il.* 10.

of the Achaeans compared to flights of birds and flies), and the simile of the bees at 84–94 (before the assembly). So, Statius was looking for a simile of this kind for the breaking up of his assembly, if possible with some *uariatio*. At that moment, he must have remembered that one of his Latin predecessors had drawn his inspiration notably from *Iliad* 2 in order to produce a new birds-and-bees simile about a crowd of soldiers withdrawing (although in another context): Silius Italicus, in his simile for the retreat of the Saguntines in *Punica* 2.215–21,⁵⁵ which became Statius' main model (with a few modifications in order to adapt the image to the mood and context of the *Achilleid*).⁵⁶ So we may infer that Homer was here the imaginative medium between Statius and Silius, because the contexts of the two episodes (a military rout in *Sil.* 2 and the breaking up of an assembly in *Achil.* 1) are so different that Statius must not have thought *directly* of *Punica* 2; but he came to Silius while looking for something “in the Homeric manner” (which gives us an indication about the way he considered Silius).

My second example will be shorter. At *Achilleid* 1.684–6, the narrator alludes to Jupiter forbidding the diversion of the course of the Fates, which embarrasses Thetis:

quippe alta Tonantis
iussa Thetin certas fatorum uertere leges
arcebant.

ACHIL. 1.684–6

For the Thunderer's high commands did not suffer Thetis to change the Fates' sure decrees.

This ban is expressed in quite Silian terms: *nec speret fixas parcarum uertere leges* (“let her not hope to change the Fates' immutable decrees,” *Sil.* 9.475), in nearly the same context⁵⁷ (it is here Pallas whom Jupiter wants to prevent from interfering in the course of events). Of course, this fatalistic idea is deeply Homeric, but the expression is specifically Silian, as in the previous example. In the context of the *Achilleid*, the reminiscence of Silius adds some solemnity to the style of the sentence: the ban is all the more categorical since it has

55 For the other intertexts of the Silian simile (notably the Vergilian ones), see Spaltenstein (1986) 1.128.

56 Statius compresses his model (as often in the *Achilleid*) and suppresses the mention of the tempest, which fits better with the context of the Saguntine rout in the *Punica*.

57 So that we may speak, at this time, of a direct Silian reminiscence.

“already” been expressed by the Supreme God, in quite the same terms and in other but similar circumstances. Here too, it seems that Statius evokes Silius when he wants to give a particularly lofty tone to his epic narrative.

The third example will point in the same direction. It is, in fact, the only Silian reminiscence of the *Achilleid* studied as such by another scholar, although it is not, in my opinion, the most obvious one. In an article about the characters of the Silian Imilce and the Statian Deidamia, Vinchesi⁵⁸ noticed that among the numerous elegiac reminiscences in the monologue of Deidamia (*Achil.* 1.927–60)⁵⁹ some details may have been specifically inspired by the episode of Imilce saying farewell to Hannibal (*Sil.* 3.61–127): in particular, the apostrophe of *Achilleid* 1.940–2 makes us think of *Punica* 3.115–18, both in the general mood (noble resignation of the wife of the hero promised to a great destiny) and in the detail of the expression (*i felix* at the beginning of a verse, *memento* at the end). As Vinchesi suggests, the Silian reminiscence conveys an impression of epic grandeur which enhances the elegiac figure of Deidamia.

I have kept for the end⁶⁰ the most significant series of Silian reminiscences in the *Achilleid*. This time, I will not start from Statius, but from Silius. More precisely, it is the seventh book of the *Punica* which will retain my attention. This book distinguishes itself in Silius’ historical epic by two important characteristics: the interest it devotes to aetiology, and the lengthy mythological and prophetic digression of its central part (7.377–493).⁶¹ It is, in a way, the most “Alexandrian” book of the *Punica*: it is thus not surprising that this book was particularly present in the mind of Statius when he was composing the *Achilleid*, an epic both full of Homeric allusions and deeply pervaded by Alexandrian spirit.⁶² I have noted, in my commentary, no less than three almost certain reminiscences of *Punica* 7 at different places in the *Achilleid* (which confirms that Statius had this book well in mind). One of them is quite isolated: *pigris addunt mucronibus iras* (“they add wrath to lazy sword points,” *Achil.* 1.435) may come from *dant mucronibus iras* (“they give wrath to sword points,” *Sil.* 7.344, in the same context of warlike preparations), since there is

58 Vinchesi (1999).

59 For a more complete study of this passage (and the other intertexts), see Rosati (1992).

60 I put aside the probable reminiscence of *Sil.* 10.77–82 (contaminated with *Luc.* 4.437–44) in *Achil.* 1.746–9 because it seems to me less significant. On this, see my notes in Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) 221–2.

61 See Littlewood (2011) for a full-length commentary on this book which highlights very well its peculiar status.

62 Although, as we shall see below, Statius has partially “de-Alexandrinized” Silius in order to suit him to his specific purpose.

seemingly no other attested parallel for this image. This quasi-quotation of Silius suggests that Statius appreciated this expressive metaphor for the sharpening of the swords; so, we may perhaps see here a kind of little homage. But it is, above all, the excursus of *Punica* 7.377–493 which was influential for him.

At *Achilleid* 1.26, Statius shows Thetis frightened by the fleet of Paris passing through the Hellespont. Of course, it reminds us of Catullus 64.12–15 (the astonishment of the Nereids seeing a ship, the Argo, for the first time),⁶³ but the context and the detail of the expression are much closer to *Punica* 7.409–21, where the Italian nymphs are frightened by a Punic fleet passing along the coast of Latium (the main model being clearly, here, Catullus 64). First, the Statian and the Silian Nereids are both scared by a ship which represents a threat to them, and not just astonished by the novelty of the spectacle like those of Catullus. Then, *Idaeos ... / expauit uitreo sub gurgite remos* (“down below the glassy flood, she took fright at Ida’s oars,” *Achil.* 1.25–6) is very close to *cum trepidae fremitu uitreis e sedibus antri / ... emersere*, “when, startled by the noise, they rose up from the glassy seats of their grotto,” *Sil.* 7.413–14). Thirdly, this movement of fear is followed by a collective movement of flight in *Achilleid* 1.27–9, as in *Punica* 7.416–19, but not in Catullus 64. And finally, Thetis recalls Proteus’ prophecy (*Achil.* 1.32), as the Silian nymphs go to consult Proteus (*Sil.* 7.419–93). So we may infer that Statius had chiefly Silius in mind rather than Catullus (who could nonetheless have functioned as an imaginative medium between Statius and Silius because of the presence of Thetis both in *Achil.* 1 and Catull. 64).⁶⁴

Having drawn his inspiration from the central excursus of *Punica* 7 in *Achilleid* 1, Statius returned to it in book 2, in Ulysses’ narrative of the causes of the Trojan war (2.49–85), which bears many similarities to the retrospective part of Proteus’ prophecy (*Sil.* 7.435–75), especially the passage devoted to the Judgment of Paris (*Achil.* 2.50–4; *Sil.* 7.437–73). In both epics, the Judgment is taken as the starting point for the Trojan war, and the two narratives have quite the same structure: the three goddesses appear in the same order (first Pallas, with an indication about her physiognomy; then Juno, with an allusion to her status as a wife of Jupiter; and then Venus); in both poems (*Achil.* 2.54 and

63 See Ganiban, pp. 73–87 in this volume.

64 The associative process must have been this: the figure of Thetis prompted Statius to think first of the well-known passage of Catullus 64 for the motif of the nymphs surprised by the ship, and then he remembered that Silius had treated this motif in a context quite similar to his own, and took the latter as his main model. It is quite the same process as we saw above with Homer and Silius. For the other intertexts, see Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) 157–8.

Sil. 7.471), the stress is laid on the astonishment of Paris facing Venus' beauty (without mentioning, at this moment, the reward promised to him by the goddess as in Ov. *Her.* 16.79–86); and in both cases, the immediate consequences of the verdict are expressed in a quite similar way: *ira quatit uictas* ("anger convulses the defeated," *Achil.* 2.58); *sed uictae fera bella deae uexere* ("but the defeated goddesses brought a fierce war," Sil. 7.472). There is also one striking parallel of expression: *formae certamina* (*Achil.* 2.51) and *certamina formae* (Sil. 7.440). On the whole, Statius seems to have compressed Silius' version, leaving aside everything which was not necessary to the purpose of the speaker,⁶⁵ Ulysses, anxious to present the facts in the most unfavorable light for Paris⁶⁶ in order to stimulate Achilles' wrath.

This series of examples show that Statius thinks of Silius mainly when he wants to evoke the background of the Trojan war or to convey a touch of *gravitas* to his narrative (with the notable exception of *Achil.* 1.20–9). It suggests that he reads the *Punica* as a "hyper-Iliadic" epic, which he uses chiefly when he wants to express a "Homeric" idea in other terms (without nevertheless being insensitive to more Alexandrian aspects of this poem). We might say, in a way, that Statius alludes to Homer through Silius. But we have also seen how he modifies the mood of some passages from Silius to suit them to his own purpose. On the whole, the reminiscences of the *Punica* are perfectly integrated into the Statian narrative, which shows how deeply Statius had assimilated Silius' work (at least, the parts of it he could have known before 95–96 CE),⁶⁷ which he uses in the same way as his other models.⁶⁸

Silius from Statius

The last question I would like to ask is whether we can find any influence of the *Achilleid* in the *Punica*. The question is worth asking, since the last books of the *Punica* could have been written after the death of Statius, and Silius

65 Especially the Alexandrian (and quite gratuitous) development of Sil. 7.441–7, so that Statius is here, quite paradoxically, much less "Alexandrian" than Silius. But it comes from the fact that there is an intended contrast in *Achil.* 1 between the backdrop of the Trojan war, where Statius is thoroughly Homeric, and the main narrative of Achilles at Scyros, which is fully Alexandrian.

66 The differences in the presentations of Pallas and Juno may be explained by the intention of Ulysses to compress the narrative and enhance the gravity of the scene in order to reinforce the rhetorical impact of his speech.

67 I did not notice any significant parallels beyond book 10 of the *Punica*, but the extent of the *Achilleid* is too limited to draw any conclusions about the dating of Silius.

68 No direct intention of homage or criticism towards Silius is clearly discernible in the examples studied above.

could have known at least a part of the *Achilleid*, whether by *recitatio* or by an immediate publication following the poet's death. What I have to propose here is only a hypothesis. In fact, I find the episode of *Punica* 16.204–7 very puzzling, where king Syphax, narrating his exchange of gifts with Scipio's father and uncle on the occasion of an embassy in Spain, tells that, among all the precious objects offered to them (gold, ivory tusks, etc.), each of the two Roman generals took only one sword for himself:

ast ego, cum contra, nostris quae copia regnis,
nunc auri ferrem, niuei nunc munera dentis,
nil ualui precibus. solos sibi cepit uterque,
quos cohibebat ebur uaginae sectilis, enses.

SIL. 16.204–7

But when I offered in return such things as my country is rich in—gifts of gold or snow-white ivory—my entreaties were of no avail. Each of the generals accepted one thing only—a sword enclosed in a scabbard of carved ivory.

This anecdote is utterly absent from the historical source, Livy 24.48, as well as from *Aeneid* 8.66–8, which is the main epic model for the passage. The parallel of Curius (Val. Max. 4.3.5) quoted by Spaltenstein⁶⁹ is quite far from the context, since there is no matter of bribery here. In fact, the closest parallel seems to be . . . the story of Achilles choosing the weapons among the gifts destined for the daughters of Lycomedes! In both cases, the choice of the sword functions as a touchstone for the martial spirit of the hero. And in fact, the entire narrative of the Numidian embassy seems to have been re-written by Silius in order to put the stress upon this highly symbolical choice. So, could this not be an allusion to the first book of the *Achilleid*, recently known by Silius?⁷⁰ And if we consider all the passages of book 16 mentioned above where Silius clearly alludes to episodes from the *Thebaid*, we come to the impression that the author of the *Punica* was eager, when writing this sixteenth book, to pay an emphatic homage to the epic poetry of Statius as a whole (both to the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*). In fact, no other book of the *Punica* contains so many and such conspicuous allusions to Statius' works. Could the main reason for all

69 Spaltenstein (1990) 2.412.

70 The parallel is all the more appealing since the younger Scipio has already been more or less assimilated to Achilles for his *celeritas* (Sil. 8.555–7): the Achillean model thus seems to be a heroic paradigm for the whole *gens*.

this not be that Statius was recently deceased, and that Silius wanted to honor his memory? So we come again to the hypothesis of *Punica* 16 being written about 96–97 CE. That is what I call an array of corroborating clues.

Conclusion

As far as the traditional problem of relative dating is concerned, I am aware that this paper has not brought many new elements; at the very most, I have attempted to consolidate the majority hypothesis, which, in my opinion, had to be done, but is not very exciting in itself. Anyway, my opinion is that the new and decisive argument which could seriously challenge this thesis has not been brought yet. However, I have also tried to suggest that an interesting trail to explore now is the one of intellectual genesis (which I tried to draft partially in some cases). Thematic and verbal parallels could be examined in order to rebuild (as far as possible) the mental process by which a poet comes to think, at a definite moment, of a poem which is not his main model, and decides to incorporate it selectively into his work. All the parallels between the *Thebaid* and the *Punica* (even the most limited ones) should be closely re-examined in this perspective, and the approach should be extended to other poets like Valerius Flaccus, in order to reach a better understanding of the mechanics of ancient poetic creation.⁷¹

71 I wish to express my gratitude to Adrienne Hoyle for rereading this paper and helping me to eliminate some mistakes in English.

Statius and Martial: Post-vatic Self-fashioning in Flavian Rome

Luke Roman

Statius and Martial, the authors respectively of the *Silvae* and the *Epigrams*, are the two main first-person poets of the Flavian period. It seems reasonable to compare their works and read them in the light of each other. Martial and Statius have indeed been compared, but within the somewhat restricted confines of an established exegetical tradition: both have been identified as “client poets”; thus analysis has focused almost exclusively on the overlap, or non-overlap, of their patronage networks; the supposed rivalry and even enmity between the two; their common acquaintances; and the shared occasions of their *Gelegenheitsgedichten*.¹ A parallel tradition of scholarship attempts to elicit the attitude of the two contemporary poets toward each other, whether one of enmity, rivalry, or mere indifference.² There is nothing wrong with this approach. Statius and Martial must have had some determinate relationship with each other, and just because biographical interpretations of literary texts have long been considered unfashionable, this does not mean that we cannot make an educated guess.

More problematic are the limited confines within which comparison takes place. Almost all analysis has focused on the poems written on shared themes with shared addressees. The list is now canonical: the marriage of Stella and Violentilla (Mart. 6.21, *Silv.* 1.2); the baths of Claudius Etruscus (Mart. 6.42, *Silv.* 1.5); the death of Glaucias, Atedius Melior’s *puer delicatus* (Mart. 6.28–9, *Silv.* 2.1); Argentaria Polla’s celebration of Lucan’s birthday (Mart. 7.21–3,

1 Martin (1939) expresses surprise that Statius and Martial never mention each other, when they seem to move in the same circles. White (1975), however, points out that, when viewed as a subset of the two poets’ total known friends and acquaintances, the number of shared acquaintances is actually quite small. Rosati, pp. 54–72 and Rühl, pp. 91–105 in this volume offer fresh approaches to the relationship of Statius and Martial with their patrons. See Dominik (forthcoming) on social life and values in the *Silvae* and *Epigrams*.

2 Heuvel (1937). While Henriksen (1998) rejects much of Heuvel’s evidence for outright hostility between the two, he nonetheless adopts an altered version of the theory.

Silv. 2.7);³ the death of Claudius Etruscus' father (Mart. 7.40, *Silv.* 3.3); the dedication of the imperial eunuch Earinus' hair (Mart. 9.11–13, 16–17, 36; *Silv.* 3.4);⁴ and Novius Vindex's Hercules Epitrapezios (Mart. 9.43–4, *Silv.* 4.6).⁵ This set of poems surely provides an interesting window onto the self-advertising habits of the early imperial elite, yet they only obliquely cast light on core similarities and differences between the literary techniques of the two poets. While it can be interesting to examine diverging approaches to the same topic, the deeper tendency of this canonical grouping of occasional poems has been to confine the two poets' interaction to the competitive pursuit of patronal connections and the personal hostility that may (or may not) have arisen from such competition. This limitation of the interaction between Statius' *Silvae* and Martial's *Epigrams* to certain concretely verifiable occasions of literary patronage and the two poets' personal relations means that complementarities and divergences of poetic mode, interactions on the plane of literary ideology, have been underplayed or ignored.

Part of the problem derives from the prominence and connotations of the terms "client poet" and "professional poet" in such discussions. Whereas scholars have long appreciated complexities of literary self-representation in the Augustan poets, Statius and Martial are still often written about as if the cliental persona constituted an exhaustive account of their motivations and interests as writers. The notion of occasion-driven, patron-oriented literary production informs the exegetical procedure whereby Statius and Martial are read almost exclusively in terms of their texts' utilitarian aims. Doubtless Statius and Martial *were* engaged in writing "poetry for patrons,"⁶ imperial and otherwise, but then again, so also were the Augustan poets. Whereas the former have been sifted to yield insight into sociological phenomena, the works of the latter have been examined primarily in terms of their organization of poetic discourse. The one-sided sociological emphasis in the case of Flavian works has the unfortunate outcome of reinforcing received ideas about the socially embedded nature of the *Epigrams* and *Silvae* as distinct from the aesthetic integrity of the Augustan classics. These ideas are derived from the self-representational tropes purveyed by the texts themselves, and then, via an often unconscious and unexamined circularity, reapplied to their interpretation. Thus while the current discussion will continue to acknowledge the crucial aspect of patron-client relations, it will also seek to identify broader

3 See Buchheit (1960).

4 See Garthwaite (1984), (1993); Henriksén (1997).

5 Kershaw (1997); Lorenz (2003); Chinn (2005).

6 From the title of Nauta (2002).

conceptual frameworks within which the similarities and differences between the literary organization of the *Silvae* and *Epigrams* may be interpreted.

In summary, scholarship focusing on the links between Martial and Statius has sought to discover whom the two poets knew, how they felt about each other, and how they went about winning and maintaining patronage. Relatively little analysis has been expended on the seemingly crucial question of how their respective works compare with each other in literary, ideological, and self-representational terms. Rather than analyzing Martial and Statius as a case study of poetic clientage, I propose to examine the persona of the “client poet” in both their works as a literary construct that at once responded to the cultural and social conditions of Flavian Rome and offered sharp-edged commentary on the vatic self-fashioning of the Augustan poets through a specifically Catullan lens.

The Poet in Flavian Rome

“ego” inquit “poeta sum et ut spero, non humillimi spiritus, si modo coronis aliquid credendum est, quas etiam ad imperitos deferre gratia solet. ‘quare ergo’ inquis ‘tam male uestitus es?’ propter hoc ipsum. amor ingenii neminem unquam diuitem fecit.”

PETRON. SAT. 83.8

“I,” he said, “am a poet, and one, I hope, endowed with no negligible inspiration, at least if one may place any trust in victory garlands, which favoritism typically confers even on the inept. ‘Why, then,’ you ask, ‘are you so badly dressed?’ For this very reason: devotion to literary talent never made anyone rich.”

The social importance of poetry in the Augustan period was accompanied by a corresponding interest in producing images of the poet in relation to his world. Central to this project was the composition of poetic works in first-person genres, and, at the same time, the elevation of the poet-figure presiding over them. The ennobled poet-figure of the Augustan period produced works of monumental status, derived his lineage from the Greek classics, and distanced himself from quotidian interests and conventional values; he insisted that he did not crave political office and was content with only modest material wealth. Aesthetic values, it was implied, trumped material interests, and literary integrity had priority over the pursuit of social connections and position. One factor motivating the creation of this rarified, ennobled image of the

uates, sequestered in his poet's grove, was the urgent need for credible writers to carry out the important ideological work of the age. Poetry was to represent the new values of the principate. It was thus all the more important that poets should appear to be single-mindedly absorbed in their art.

For *post*-Augustan writers, this exhaustive project of poetic self-fashioning became problematic: the Augustan *uates* had been relentlessly promoted, elevated, and finally, deconstructed. The result was a default weariness and skepticism already visible in the late Horace.⁷ After all, had not several Augustan poets, even as they trumpeted the values of simple living and seclusion, achieved substantial social prominence and material wealth? The notion of the ennobled *uates* lapsed first into cliché, and eventually into fodder for satire. By the time of Petronius' *Satyricon*, the figure of the self-important poet, who loftily proclaims his marginalized status within society, had become an all-too-predictable social type. The narrator Encolpius, when Eumolpus enters the *pinacotheca*, immediately identifies him (*facile apparet*) as belonging to "that class of literati whom the rich customarily despise" (Petron. *Sat.* 83.7).

Given this environment of cynicism regarding the poet's social identity, one option is simply to avoid poetry altogether; another is to position oneself as a knowing satirist of poets. The early imperial period is dominated by writers of prose (Tacitus, Seneca, the younger and elder Pliny, Quintilian), poets who critique or otherwise subvert the poetic vocation (Persius, Lucan, Martial, Juvenal) and prosimetric satirists (Petronius' *Satyricon*, Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*). Poetic ambitions, however, did not simply die out. Aspiring writers continued to entertain hopes of becoming the next "Naso" or "Maro." Martial paints a vivid picture of such aspirants.

quae te causa trahit uel quae fiducia Romam,
 Sexte? quid aut speras aut petis inde? refer.
 "causas" inquis "agam Cicerone disertior ipso
 atque erit in triplici par mihi nemo foro."
 egit Atestinus causas et Ciuis—utrumque
 noras—; sed neutri pensio tota fuit.
 "si nihil hinc ueniet, pangentur carmina nobis;
 audieris, dices esse Maronis opus."
 insanis: omnes gelidis quicumque lacernis
 sunt ibi, Nasones Vergiliosque uides.

MART. 3.38.1–10

7 On the early imperial conception of the poet's place in society, the figure of Eumolpus, and the origins of satirical representations of poetic activity, see Labate (1995).

What motive, or what expectation, draws you to Rome, Sextus? What do you either seek or hope for from there? Tell me. “I shall argue cases,” you reply, “more eloquently than Cicero himself, and no one will be my equal in the three forums.” Atestinus and Civis argued cases—you knew them both—but neither fully covered his rent. “If nothing comes of this, I will compose poetry. When you hear it, you will say it is the work of Maro.” You must be crazy. All the people you see here in frozen cloaks are “Nasos” and “Vergils.”

If we believe Martial, the tremendous success of the Augustan poets has spawned a plurality of imitators. Yet while many come to Rome with dreams of becoming a poet, the reality is harsh and unforgiving: would-be Vergils end up shivering on the street. Martial’s brutal reduction of the poetic calling to a futile attempt to make money appears to assume a degree of cynicism in the culture at large. It is not just that these poets are failing in their quest to become a new Maro or Flaccus for the Flavian age; it is that their reasons for doing so are nakedly careerist and cash-driven in the first place. Can anyone who views poetry as a gainful occupation hope to become the next “Maro”?

As a panegyrist rather than a satirist, Statius does not offer a scathingly ironic portrait of the Flavian poet as sordid opportunist. A core aim of the *Silvae* is praise, and since Statius praises patrons who write poetry, poets as a class are hardly going to be depicted with a harshly negative slant. At the same time, he shares with Martial the sense of being overshadowed by apparently insuperable Augustan models:

en egomet somnum et geniale secutus
litus, ubi Ausonio se condidit hospita portu
Parthenope, tenues ignauo pollice chordas
pulso Maroneique sedens in margine templi
sumo animum et magni tumulis accanto magistri.

SILV. 4.4.51–5

See, here I am, pursuing slumber and the genial shore where Parthenope, a stranger, took refuge in an Ausonian harbor; I strike the slender strings with idle thumb, and, sitting at the threshold of Maro’s shrine, take heart and sing by the great master’s tomb.

The vivid image of Statius composing poetry in the shadow of Vergil’s tomb conveys some sense of how challenging it was to assume the role of poet in

a post-Augustan context.⁸ At the very least, we can appreciate how serious poetic ambitions required counterbalancing gestures of deference and self-subordination. Here however Statius refers to his epic poetry. The *Silvae* belong to an altogether humbler class of literary product:

quid enim <opus eo tempore hos> quoque auctoritate editionis onerari, quo adhuc pro Thebaide mea, quamuis me reliquerit, timeo? sed et Culicem legimus et Batrachomachiam etiam agnoscimus, nec quisquam est inlustrium poetarum qui non aliquid operibus suis stilo remissiore praeluserit.

SILV. 1 PRAEF. 5–10

For what need is there for these compositions also to be burdened with the authority of publication at a time when I am still fearful for my *Thebaid*, although it has left my hands? But we read the *Culex* and even recognize the *Batrachomachia*; nor is there any eminent poet who has not produced a prelude to his works with something in a more relaxed manner.

Statius hesitates (rhetorically) to confer the burdensome “authority of publication” (*auctoritate editionis*) on his humble occasional compositions, but argues that even serious, famous writers, such as Vergil and Homer, have published minor works in a lighter vein. Remarkable in this arrangement is the polarization of literary options: on the one hand, a poet’s serious, official works (*Aeneid*, *Iliad*, *Thebaid*), and on the other hand, their unserious ludic supplements (*Culex*, *Batrachomachia*, *Silvae*). Notably missing in this dichotomy of the sublime and the risible, the formidably grand and the merely (pre)ludic, is any place for poetic genres of a middle stature that fall below epic on the scale of grandeur but admit of serious literary ambitions.

Martial, in his *Apophoreta*, offers up the very same authors and works as part of a contrast between opposing literary modes.⁹ On a more general level, Martial’s broader strategy of self-definition as an epigrammatist revolves around an intensified opposition between the very large and the very small, the totalizing and the negligible. There is little space in this polarized scheme for the elevated *uates*-figure of the Augustan first-person genres, who writes

8 Some of the larger issues concerning patronage in the Flavian age, and the distinct position of Flavian poets vis-à-vis the Augustans, are discussed by Newlands (2002) 29–30.

9 A sequence of gift-objects as follows: Homer’s *Batrachomyomachia* (Mart. 14.183), Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (184), Vergil’s *Culex* (185), the works of “vast Maro” (*immesum . . . Maronem*, 186.1).

with Callimachean stringency of style, but harbors serious ambitions for his transcendent, immortal work. Instead, both Martial and Statius, in different ways, revive the Catullan model of poetic *nugae* and *lusus*—non-serious light verse with associations of extemporaneity, miscellany, and ludic informality. The title *Silvae* suggests, among other things, the informality of a rough draft,¹⁰ while *Epigrammata* implies a link between the poet's script and the object or occasion to which his writing is concretely attached. Both poets, in different ways, impose initial limits on their poetry's autonomy and authority; they espouse a model of first-person poetry as small-scale, occasion-driven, and patron-oriented. Finally, both poets adopt the novel practice of affixing prose prefaces to their poetic collections. These epistolary prefaces no doubt serve specific strategic purposes, but we must also appreciate their signifying function: they suggest the priority of the work's social embeddedness within a discourse of elite *amicitia* at the expense of a traditional poetic invocation or proem, and in a very basic way, dilute the conception of the poetic itself through the framing, paratextual presence of prose.¹¹

Gestures of literary deference and self-deprecation are accompanied by social deference toward patrons and the emperor. The authoritarian character of Domitian's reign in particular placed limits on poets' capacity for self-assertion in the self-representational genres. Can we imagine a Domitianic Horace composing an *Epistle to Domitian*, lecturing the emperor on how best to foster his own literary image? It was no longer tactically shrewd to assume the role of proudly autonomous *uates* in the style of Horace, *Odes* 3.30 or Propertius 3.1. Both Martial and Statius craft first-person poetic modes that, at least on the surface, are socially deferent, ideologically correct, and pliant to the demands of diverse social occasions. Gestures of non-seriousness, situation-specific utility, and deference furnish an anticipatory defense against now ingrained skepticism of the transcendent, high-principled *uates*, and at the same time, promise a degree of conformity with the current social and political climate. Tactics of conformity could also work to safeguard a limited measure of poetic freedom. The poetics of self-deprecation provide Flavian poets with a protective shelter behind which they are able to explore sometimes provocative and bold themes. For Martial, unrestrained obscenity, vicious invective, and

10 Quint. *Inst.* 10.3.17; but see Newlands (2009b) 240. For various interpretations of the term, see Newmyer (1979) 3–7; Bright (1980) 20–49; van Dam (1984) 16–17 n. 32; Newlands (2002) 38–9, (2011b) 6–7; Wray (2007).

11 Johannsen (2006). Newlands (2009b) offers a concise, synthetic interpretation of the prose prefaces: “the preface draws attention to the poet and to his social connections as well as to his literary worth” (235).

cunning satirical observation coexist in uneasy tension alongside cliental compliments and imperial panegyric. Statius combines praise of the emperor with extended exploration of the autonomous leisure-realms his patrons enjoyed at their villas and he himself in retirement to the Bay of Naples.¹² Such literary liberties are purchased by an initial rhetoric of heteronomy. One aspect of this rhetoric concerns the book itself, which, even as it is presented to the reader's attention as an integral entity, is at the same time dismantled into items of individual use.

Disassembling the Book

The prose epistle opening Statius' first book of *Silvae* introduces his readers to a novel kind of collection:

nullum enim ex illis biduo longius tractum, quaedam et in singulis diebus effusa. quam timeo ne uerum istuc uersus quoque ipsi de se probent!

SILV. 1 PRAEF. 13–15

None of these took longer than two days to compose, and some were dashed off in a single day. How I fear lest the verses testify on their own behalf to the truth of it!

Statius goes out of his way to emphasize the extemporaneity of his poems and the short duration of their composition. He measures his rapidly composed verses in hundreds, and appears to be well aware that he is contravening Callimachean protocols of long, painstaking composition.¹³ In general, Statius makes far too much, in programmatic terms, of his "slack" compositional technique in the *Silvae* to be innocent of the provocative connotations of such laxity in the first-person poetic tradition (*subito calore . . . festinandi uoluptate . . . stilo remissione . . . gratiam celeritatis . . . in singulis diebus effusa*, "in the heat of the moment . . . pleasure of haste . . . a somewhat lax manner of writing . . . charm of rapidity . . . dashed off in a single day," *Silv. 1 praef. 3–14*).

In a post-Callimachean literary milieu, it is striking and unusual for an author to apologize elaborately and repeatedly for the hasty, *ex tempore* production of

12 See Myers (2000); Newlands (2002) *passim*.

13 On this challenge to Callimacheanism, see Rosati, pp. 54–72 in this volume.

his own poetry.¹⁴ In another prefatory epistle, Statius alludes to the *lima* ("file") traditionally applied by the author to highly polished poetic compositions, but instead places it in the hands of a notional critic:

huius amissi recens uulnus, ut scis, epicedio prosecutus sum adeo festinanter ut excusandum habuerim affectibus tuis celeritatem. nec nunc eam apud te iacto qui nosti, sed et ceteris indico, ne quis asperiore lima carmen examinet et a confuso scriptum et dolenti datum, cum paene superuacua sint tarda solacia.

SILV. 2 PRAEF. 7–13

As you know, I so rapidly followed up the fresh wound of his loss with an epicedium that I felt I had to apologize to your feelings for my haste. I am not now boasting of such speed before you, who know the circumstance, but I am making it known to others, lest anyone scrutinize with too harsh a file a poem which was written by a disconcerted poet and given to a recipient in mourning, since late consolations are nearly superfluous.

We have been taught to be wary of rhetorical self-denigration as a recurrent feature of the ancient Roman preface. Statius, however, places an unusual emphasis on lack of compositional care and the priority of social occasion over aesthetic integrity. Even if prefatory self-deprecation is conventional, we must nonetheless ask why Statius insists repeatedly on these particular self-deprecatory themes.

For White, the published book represents the last and least important phase of circulation of Statius' occasional poetry. On his argument, it makes much more sense that Statius (as well as Martial) originally presented his poems as individualized *libelli* to specific patrons, in which form they performed their primary function in a coherent, targeted fashion, and then later gathered them together for publication.¹⁵ The prefaces, for White, reveal some of the strain involved in drawing together diverse strands of poetry originally devoted to quite separate purposes. This thesis has been debated,¹⁶ but even acceptance of White's thesis should not exclude the possibility that Statius was also interested, for what might be termed broadly literary reasons, in the tension between the synthetic integrity of a poetic collection and its diversity of

14 Newmyer (1979) 7–9. Note Newlands (2009b) 236: "modesty... is a trope that demonstrates the poet's virtuosity."

15 White (1974).

16 Especially by Fowler (1995); response in White (1996).

use-specific occasional poems. The opening sentence of the first book brings up the topic directly: *diu multumque dubitavi . . . an hos libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi uoluptate fluxerunt . . . congregatos ipse dimitterem* ("I have hesitated much and long . . . whether I would gather together and send off these *libelli* myself—compositions which I dashed off in the heat of the moment with a certain pleasure of haste," *Silv.* 1 *prae*f. 1–5).¹⁷

Statius, in the act of gathering together poems for publication in a cohesive book, encourages the reader to recognize the disparate pieces out of which the book was formed. This gesture looks in two directions at once: the author both presents the literary collection as a unity and notionally dismantles it into its constituent parts.¹⁸ The epistolary preface as literary form enacts a similar duality: it provides the general reader a point of access to the synthetic work through the conduit of a notionally personal letter to an individual *amicus*. This contextualizing discourse draws our attention outside the domain of the poetic text to the social occasions that gave rise to its compositions. Statius frames his occasional poems in the form of a poetic collection for general readers by *re-embedding* them within their disparate occasions; he denies their apparent literary polish and re-invokes the "heat of the moment" in which they originally "flowed" into being.

Martial presents a comparable notion of a book that can be disassembled into its constituent parts, each of which may be applied to its own use-specific end. His early Saturnalian books are defined by this concept in their very design: food-items at a banquet, and gifts "to be carried away" (*apophoreta*) by guests at a party, correspond to individual two-line epigrams. The reader/guest, then, can notionally detach individual epigrams from the book to be "used" in isolation:

quo uis cumque loco potes hunc finire libellum:
uersibus explicitum est omne duobus opus.
lemmata si quaeris cur sint adscripta, docebo:
ut, si malueris, lemmata sola legas.

MART. 14.2

You can finish this little book wherever you like. Each piece is completed in two lines. If you want to know why headings are added, I will tell you: so that, if you prefer, you may read only the headings.

17 Cf. Plin. *Ep.* 1.1: *ut epistulas . . . colligerem publicaremque* ("[you have often urged me] to collect and publish . . . my letters").

18 Cf. Newlands (2009b) 230.

This concept of a book divisible into its constituent pieces—here represented by the *lemmata* that correspond to individual objects of use—is not confined to the early collections. Throughout his oeuvre, Martial presents his readers with books composed of epigrams that are applied disparately to various tasks, that can be detached from the whole in order to address a specific person or need. Among such disparate uses, one may include the dedication of personally crafted *libelli* destined for individual patrons, as reconstructed by White. The underlying generic conception of epigram suggests a rapidly composed, witty utterance applied to a situation, person, or object close at hand. It is perhaps not surprising that Martial shares with Statius the basic notion of impromptu poetic composition applied to individual projects and ends. Describing two “trifling” (*leues*) poems he wrote for Atedius Melior, Statius likens them, on the basis of their facility (*facilitatem*) and rapidity of composition, and presumably their close connection with specific items (tree, parrot), to epigrams (*libellos quasi epigrammatis loco scriptos*, “poems written almost as if they were epigrams,” *Silv.* 2 *praef.* 15–16).

Both Martial and Statius are strongly invested, like their model Catullus, in the rhetoric of the *Gelegenheitsgedicht*. The concept of the vivid, concretely targeted, notionally single-use composition can be traced back to him: for example, Catullus threatens hendecasyllables as punishment (Catull. 12, 42); extends a dinner invitation (13); and sends a billet-doux to Ipsitilla (32), a letter to Caecilius (35), and a thank-you note to Cicero (49). Catullus, like Statius, chose to publish a book of informal, ludic material (*nugas*, Catull. 1.4; cf. *stilo remissiore*, *Silv.* 1 *praef.* 10) that could not be classified within the category of a known genre. Martial even more explicitly claims a Catullan lineage for the poetic *libellus*. This Flavian revival of Catullan poetics merits some further consideration.

Ephemerality, Saturnalia, and the Vogue for Catullan *Versiculi*

Catullus functioned as a kind of “anti-*uates*” for the Flavians.¹⁹ In terms of the underlying conception of their poetic project and social role, Martial and Statius probably had more in common with the Augustans than with Catullus. The Flavian poets lived and wrote under the principate, produced works in established genres organized in numbered books, avoided displays of literary *libertas*, and developed avowedly literary careers. Nonetheless the *idea* of Catullan informality, playfulness, ephemerality, and casual dilettantism is used

19 Note the continuation of the vogue in the younger Pliny: Roller (1998).

by the Flavians as a convenient antidote to the potential burden of being a Poet in the Augustan sense. Statius, of course, assumes the role of a very Vergilian sort of poet in his *Thebaid*, but the self-representational dimension of this work is relatively marginal. When the Flavians spoke in a first-person mode to their friends, patrons, readers, and emperor, they preferred to evoke the style of playful informality associated with the Catullan polymetrics: it afforded an escape from the dilemma of fashioning oneself as a high-principled, austere *uates* in an age that required a convincing show of humility before the very powerful and the extremely wealthy.

Martial openly advertises Catullus as exemplar of the short, jocular poem. Statius, whose panegyric mode does not allow for direct alignment with Catullus as model, nonetheless singles out his trademark hendecasyllabic meter for imitation. *Silvae* books 1, 2, and 4 significantly end with hendecasyllabic poems; in book 4, two poems in hendecasyllabic meter (4.3, 4.9) are balanced by two Horatian odes (4.5, 4.7); 4.9 responds extensively and intricately to Catullus 14, while the choice of hendecasyllables to celebrate the Saturnalia in 1.6 is evocative of the same poem.²⁰ For Martial, too, Saturnalia and Catullan poetics are tightly linked elements. The *libellus* of bad poets sent by Calvus on the Saturnalia (Catull. 14) becomes the prototype of literary ephemerality for the epigrammatist, who, inverting Catullus' emphasis, aligns his own literary production with the short-lived chapbooks customarily circulated during this holiday.²¹ A Martialian/Catullan *libellus* is playful, ephemeral, festive, drenched with wine, and associated with the inversion of normal social priorities.

Even as Martial and Statius mimicked the idiom of ephemeral *uersiculi*, they wrote in a cultural context saturated with ideas of monumentality and eternity. The Flavians were restoring the glories of the eternal city in the wake of Nero and the destruction of the great fires of 64 and 80 CE. The imperial system, no longer linked to the fragile lineage of the Julio-Claudians, was imbued with a new sense of permanence and perpetuity. The emperor Domitian in particular was represented as a divine being on the level of Jupiter. *Silvae* 1.6, a poem in hendecasyllabic meter on Domitian's Saturnalia, affords a striking example of imperial eternity couched in a literary medium associated with slight, jocular *uersiculi*. The Saturnalia are accompanied by wine (1.6.5), joking, and wit (*et ridens Iocus et Sales proterui*, 6), while a conspicuous reference to the fleeting

20 See Seo (2008) on *Silvae* 4.9 and the connection with Martial—a rare instance of a comparison of the two poets based on poetics.

21 See Citroni (1989).

“day”²² of festivity frames the poem at either end (*diem beatum*, 7; *hic dies*, 98). This day, however, because of its connection with the divine Domitian, will be preserved throughout eternity:

quos ibit procul hic dies per annos?
 quam nullo sacer exolescet aeuo,
 dum montes Latii paterque Thybris
 dum stabit tua Roma dumque terris
 quod reddis Capitolium manebit!

SILV. 1.6.98–102

Through how many years will this day travel? Sacred, it shall not pass away in any age, for as long as the Latian hills and father Tiber shall endure, as long as *your* Rome shall stand and the Capitolium you restored to the world shall remain!

Embedding Horatian syntax (*dum . . . stabit*; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.8–9) in Catullan meter,²³ Statius fuses the former’s concerns with monumentality and eternity of empire with the latter’s themes of ephemerality, pleasure, and license.²⁴ Like Catullus, Statius immortalizes a fleeting day in verse (*dies*; cf. Catull. 14.15: *optimo dierum*), but unlike Catullus, he equates that day’s immortality with the eternity of Rome’s buildings, cults, and lands. At the close of *Silvae* 4.3, a hendecasyllabic poem, Statius’ Sibyl predicts Domitian’s immortality as emperor in conjunction with the long lifetime of the road he has built, the Via Domitiana (4.3.158–63). Martial similarly harnesses Horatian immortality-*topoi* to the praise of Domitianic monuments: the Temple of the Flavian Gens “shall endure along with the sun and stars and Roman daylight” (*manebit altum Flaviae decus gentis / cum sole et astris cumque luce Romana*, Mart. 9.1.8–9) and Domitian’s palace surpasses the “royal wonders of the pyramids” (*Regia pyramidum . . . miracula*, 8.36.1).

Both Statius and Martial, then, allude to Augustan *topoi* of poetic immortality and vatic supremacy in the very act of shifting such immortality onto the emperor and his works. The priority of immortal poetic medium over the

22 Compare the similarly hendecasyllabic poem ending book 2: *Lucani proprium diem . . .* (*Silv.* 2.7.1).

23 On possible associations (or non-associations) of the hendecasyllabic meter, see Damon (1992) 304; Morgan (2000) 115–16; Newlands (2002) 228.

24 For different interpretations of the significance of Saturnalian *libertas* in *Silv.* 1.6, see Damon (1992); Newlands (2002) 227–59.

materiality of monumental building projects has been neatly and pointedly reversed: now it is Domitian, and not the poet (*exegi monumentum*, “I have completed a monument,” Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.1), who is the master-builder. The emperor creates immortal monuments reminiscent of the Augustan masterpieces, whereas Martial and Statius employ literary modes and meters reminiscent of the ludic, nugatory compositions of Catullus.

The Flavian poets seem, at times, to go out of their way to play down their poetic authority, to avoid a transcendent, vatic stance that might complicate or compromise the panegyric mask of deferential self-fashioning. This tactic coheres with a broader strategy of undermining Poetry’s high separate purpose and the sequestered status of the poet. Whereas rural *secessus* functioned as a key signifier of the poet’s autonomy in the Augustan period, Martial and Statius devote extended poetic description to their patrons’ elegant villas rather than their own.²⁵ The Flavian poets were villa-owners no less than Horace and Tibullus,²⁶ but they avoid a conspicuous identification of their position as writers with rural *secessus*. An autarkic stronghold is no place for an obliging client-poet. Finally, neither Statius nor Martial subscribes to the principle of poetic *paupertas*. Whereas Horace and the elegists founded their ethical position on a proclaimed indifference to material wealth, the Flavian poets are skeptical of high-principled *paupertas*, and display a robust appreciation for the magnificent real estate and ultra-refined lifestyles of their patrons.²⁷

It is important to stress, once again, that abandoning the organizing themes of high-vatic self-fashioning does not necessarily signal the servility and cynicism of the Flavian court poets. Rather they were perceptive in recognizing and brilliant in adapting themselves to the currents of cultural change. The poet’s *nemus* was a weakened cliché that no one could claim any longer with a straight face, and the villa as site of authorial autonomy was, quite simply, outdated, the guiding literary trope of a past generation—suitable for grand men annexing literary laurels to their already considerable prestige, but not for socially marginal but ferociously ambitious poets like Martial and Statius. Augustan models of poetic self-representation remained crucially important for the Flavians, but it is understandable why they also turned to Catullus, whose playful tone was apt for puncturing bardic solemnity, and whose ethical stance was the opposite of solemn or high-minded. Statius and Martial reveal an ingenious instinct for the combination of different elements of the

25 Newlands (2002) 119–98, esp. 120; Myers (2000).

26 See, e.g., Mart. 10.92, *Silv.* 3.1.61–5. For another city-centered “client poet,” who casually drops a reference to his villa, cf. Juv. 3.318–22.

27 Newlands (2002) 3–7.

literary tradition. They work both with and against their Augustan predecessors, selectively assimilate Catullus, and at the same time, incorporate satiric concepts of the poet's scurrility. Drawing upon these diverse strands, Martial and Statius created the client-poet, a figure who was careful to present himself as overtly deferent toward superiors, but in other moments, paraded his *libertas* and *licentia*. The client poet, depending on context, occasion, and addressee, could be flattering, sardonic, sly, evasive, aloof, and satirically scathing. Flexibility was his ultimate asset.

The Difference Satire Makes

I have focused thus far on points of convergence between Martial and Statius in order to call attention to certain shared elements in the ideology of Flavian poetic self-representation that have been underappreciated. At first glance, however, Martial's *Epigrams* and Statius' *Silvae* look like very different poetic modes. Martial writes mostly short poems in a relatively unadorned, vernacular idiom; he varies pieces addressed to patrons and the emperor with satiric treatments of urban life; he is capable of breathtaking cynicism and obscenity, and approaches his satiric subjects with a keen eye for the sordid materialities of everyday existence. The compositions that make up Statius' *Silvae* are comparatively long, intricate and elevated in language, and overtly erudite; in keeping with their panegyric mode, they maintain a fairly positive, praise-oriented tone. While Statius addresses major building projects of the emperor, he does not accord significant attention to quotidian urban life. Statius, like Martial, is interested in the *poetica degli oggetti*,²⁸ but avoids the gritty texture of urban materiality. Instead, he articulates an enhanced, exalted materialism that idealizes the capacity of the Roman ruling class to control, shape, and ultimately improve on nature through ingenious artifice and immense resources. Finally, Statius' self-presentation in the *Silvae* is inevitably affected by his authorship of the *Thebaid*. When a poet speaks deprecatingly of his nugatory, occasional verse, it means something different if he has also produced an epic masterpiece. Martial, by comparison, remains more permanently and radically committed to his small-scale, first-person, realist mode.

This last-mentioned difference corresponds to a broader divergence between mythological and satiric approaches to poetry in the early empire. On the one hand, we have authors of mythological epic and tragedy (Statius, Valerius Flaccus, Seneca), and on the other, satirists who attack the superficial-

28 The phrase belongs to Salemmme (1976).

ity of mythological poetry and its irrelevance to life (Persius, Martial, Juvenal). Martial's satirical epigrams differ sharply in tone and focus not only from the *Thebaid*, but also from Statius' panegyric *Silvae*, which, even as they refer to real individuals and events, avoid the darker aspects of city life, remaining largely within the ambit of elite *otium*.

The preceding pages have offered a prolegomenon to a study of the differences between Martial and Statius. They only begin to sketch out the two poets' differing responses to and representation of the social and political climate of Flavian Rome. Shared structures of literary ideology and the initial self-positioning of poetic speech have been favored over content and substantive divergences of viewpoint. An attempt to address the latter set of concerns might well begin by considering a topic central to both poets' interests: socio-economic class and the extremes of wealth and poverty in the Flavian city. Immediately conspicuous is the relative seamlessness of Statius' world of elite *otium* by comparison with the jagged miscellany of Martial's *Epigrams*. The heterogeneous nature of the epigrammatic *libellus* produces a series of piquant juxtapositions of and movement between social, political, and economic registers as the poet passes quickly from exquisite villa to urban sordidity, courtly compliment to scoptic vitriol.

On the whole, Martial is disposed to admire wealth and despise poverty, and does not set himself up as critic of the social system. On the other hand, the epigrammatic mode he designed affords multiple opportunities for viewing and examining points of social tension. Martial, rather than concealing the difference in wealth between himself and his patrons, continually plays on disjunctions of status and resources in disquieting ways. Statius, whose *Silvae* consists of poems addressed exclusively to members of the patron class, offers a more seamless picture of material wealth.²⁹ Anticipating the younger Pliny, he situates himself among a network of wealthy individuals interested in literary *studia*, villa architecture, and the visual arts.

In *Epigrams* 12.57, Martial teases his wealthy, villa-owning patron Sparsus who, inhabiting a profoundly quiet, autarkic garden property above the city, fails to appreciate the plight of the sleep-deprived epigrammatist in his noisy apartment. In Martial, the foundations are being laid for Juvenalian *indignatio*: does the poet deserve the indignities he suffers? Statius represents the villa-owner's character as naturally matched with that of his villa (*dominique imitantia mores*, *Silv.* 2.2.29); he is eminently *worthy* of owning it. We might also consider the two poets' contrasting poetic responses to Domitian's restoration of the Saepta Julia. Statius meets the wealthy collector Novius Vindex

29 See further Gibson, pp. 123–38 in this volume.

while strolling in this trendy market area, accepts his dinner invitation, and proceeds to his elegantly appointed house (*Silv.* 4.6). Martial's Mamurra is too poor to buy anything of value in the Saepta (Mart. 9.59), while his Selius wanders there fruitlessly in the hopes of cadging an invitation to dinner (2.14). Epigram focuses on lack and ungratified desire amidst the city's opulence; Statius quickly leaves the Flavian cityscape in order to enter the world of the wealthy patron's possessions.

One possible context for understanding these differences—to reinvolve the question of rivalry deferred at the outset of this chapter—is the competition for patronage. Different patrons will find appeal in different poetic styles. The kind of patron who fancies being addressed in Martial's epigrams will not take offence at their teasing, provocative insinuations and their rapid shifts between privileged *otium* and sordid urban scenes: he may even consider himself sophisticated and urbane for allowing himself to be named in the epigrammatist's notionally transgressive *libelli*. Statius' patrons may have appreciated less overtly transgressive encomium, or may have disdained the puerile impulse to *épater le bourgeois*. While it is probably impossible to try to recover Statius' and Martial's actual views on disparities of wealth and status in Roman society, it is hard to deny that these disparities are more immediately and insistently visible in the *Epigrams*, and that this difference between the two poets may have affected the diverse appeal their poetic modes held for potential patrons.³⁰

Politics and imperial power afford another important area of diverging poetic treatment that can only be glanced at here. Both writers offer extravagant encomium of Domitian, and both, in different ways, engage in counterbalancing tactics of poetic autonomy. Attempting to gauge degrees of loyalty and dissent in one poet or the other, or to discover an implicit strain of criticism of the emperor in either, will likely be fruitless. It may be worthwhile, however, to consider briefly the distinctive basis of autonomy (however fragile) in each instance. Martial, whose obscene verse, at least at first glance, is not fully in keeping with the tone of Domitian's moral program, appears to have relied both on the carnivalesque suspension of social normality associated with Saturnalian festivity,³¹ and on the popularity of his poetry among contemporary and future Roman readers. His poetry pursues its freedom in the ultimately uncontrollable moral disorder of the city and the delight the satirical representation of this disorder affords the reading populace. Statius' *Silvae*,

30 The major, recent treatment of the two poets' modes of "literary communication" with their patrons is Nauta (2002).

31 On the interaction between Saturnalian jesting and panegyric, see Nauta (2002) 166–89.

by contrast, aligns poetic autonomy with meticulously ordered precincts of *otium*, the autarkic domain of the patronal villa, and the poet's own retirement to the Bay of Naples. In one case, poetry's freedom is premised on mass circulation and carnivalesque disorder, and in the other, withdrawal from the city to spaces of leisure and autarky.

Conclusion

The foregoing comparison of Statius and Martial, rather than pursuing a traditional analysis of patronal connections, shared occasions of commissioned poetry, and personal rivalries, has sought to shed light on the ideology of poetic self-representation in Flavian Rome. Statius and Martial were in the difficult position of constructing literary personalities in verse in a period when the figure of the grand Augustan *uates* was both irrecoverable and *passé*, and when the requirements of social deference to patrons and the emperor left minimal space for overt expressions of literary independence. The persona of the client-poet offered an ingenious solution: hints of Catullan insouciance and jocularly, the ephemerality of light, occasional verse, Saturnalian festivity, and carefully deployed motifs of literary self-deprecation were combined to form a constellation of anti-vatic self-representational motifs.

This shared core of self-deprecatory rhetoric nonetheless did not result in broadly similar representations of Flavian Rome. Whereas Statius, in his *Silvae*, represents a world composed of a series of well-insulated spaces of refuge and sophisticated *otium*, Martial's satiric vision moves between his patrons' secluded villas and the sordid urban fabric. The plenitude of Statius' vision of elite leisure practices is at once inverted and complemented by Martial's vision of lack and ungratified desire as driving forces behind obsessive urban behavior. Statius' *Silvae* and Martial's *Epigrams*, as in the more closely studied instance of Flavian epic, enact a dialectic of similarity and difference that contributes to the vibrant tensions of the Flavian cultural field.

PART 7

Reception



Reading Statius Through a Biographical Lens

Ruth Parkes

Behind the name “Statius” lies a story of multiple identities. Even allowing for his varied corpus (including martial epic, alternative epic,¹ and occasional poetry), the number of conflicting and competing portraits of the poet to have emerged over the centuries has the capacity to surprise. Was he an historian or an allegorist? A moralist or nihilist? A pagan or a Christian? Was he a diplomatic court poet, a fawning sycophant, or practitioner of doublespeak? Did he come from Naples? Or did he hail from France, as was thought by those medieval readers who, lacking the guidance of the *Silvae*,² identified him with the first-century Toulouse rhetorician L. Statius Ursulus?³ Be it the introduction to a medieval text or a Penguin Classic, literature is rarely devoid of a context containing some authorial data and dependent interpretation, a reflection of a desire to create the author in the process of receiving him which is evident even in those conscious of the dangers of biographical fallacy.⁴ From Homeric verse onwards, reception of literature has been bound up with biographical assumptions concerning the author which have been inferred from the texts themselves or accruing exegetical material.⁵ This chapter examines the case of Statius, arguing that access to different kinds of biographical material had an impact not only on his varied portrayal, but also on the reworking of his poetic material, as later writers exploited certain kinds of assumptions about Statius (whether or not they truly held them) to address their own concerns.

The first section looks at what was known, or thought to be known about Statius, and considers the impact of the loss of the *Silvae* during the Middle

1 I.e., the *Achilleid*: see Hinds (1998) 124–9, 137–43 for the argument that this poem is slotting itself into an alternative epic tradition it has retrospectively created.

2 For ignorance of virtually almost all the *Silvae* in the Middle Ages, see Coleman (1988) xxxii; Anderson (2009) l.xiii–xvii. There does appear to have been some knowledge of at least one poem, 2.7: for the much debated issue of which *Silvae* may have been known, see, e.g., Laguna (1992) 36; Adkin (2004); Anderson (2009) l.xv.

3 Cf. “Stait don airdfilid Frangcach sochinelach” (“Statius the well-born eminent poet of the Franks,” *Togail na Tebe* 8–9), “Stazio di Tolosa” (“Statius of Toulouse,” Boccaccio, *Amorosa Visione* 5.34), and “The Tholosan that highte Stace” (Chaucer, *House of Fame* 1460).

4 See, e.g., Hinds (1998) 49–50 on the creation of an intention-bearing author.

5 Cf. Graziosi (2002) on Homer.

Ages. The second section examines three aspects of Statian biographical material that were ripe for appropriation: Statius' self-advertised status as a Philhellene, as a client poet, and as an epigonal writer.

Finding Statius

A key source of evidence about Statius is Statius himself. Apparently autobiographical but sparsely detailed material appears in the *Silvae*.⁶ Further information may arguably be gleaned from those parts of the epics (notably the start of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* and the end of the *Thebaid*) where Statius' authorial presence is strongest. This internal information, such as it is, outstrips the external. There is little contemporary material evidence concerning Statius' life⁷ and scant literary attestation. Matter accrues in the exegetical tradition over time⁸ and different ages laid emphasis upon different biographical aspects, as shown by the prominence attached to Statius' name as a "source" in the Middle Ages, when, for example, in line with the common medieval view of this poet as a moral authority,⁹ "Statius" was linked to *stare* and the author's upright standing,¹⁰ and his supposed name Sursulus was derived from *sursus canens* ("singing from on high")¹¹ and connected with the quality or sweetness of his singing.¹² However, the fact remains that there is comparatively little ancient material outside the Statian corpus. The poet has no ancient *Vita*, as in the case of other writers such as Vergil. Indeed, the only textual source from around the time is provided by Juvenal's portrayal in *Satire* 7, lines which frequently appeared in *accessus* (starting from the highly influential tenth

6 Anderson (2009) 3.vi.

7 See Clinton (1972) for possible external evidence regarding Statius' father.

8 See Anderson (2009) 3 *passim* for the evolution of the *accessus* to Statius' poetry. On the *accessus*, an academic introduction which discusses the writer's life in terms of his work, see Anderson (2009) 3.i–v.

9 Cf. Battles (2004) 6–12.

10 Cf. Battles (2004) 7, citing the *In principio accessus*; Anderson (2009) 3.22, on the Lincoln College *accessus*.

11 Or Surculus, derived from *sursum canens*. See Anderson (2009) 3.2.

12 Cf. Anderson (2009) 3.47 (a connection with Statius' lofty wisdom). The name was also linked with a shoot (Anderson [2009] 3.103) and sort of root (Anderson [2009] 3.47). Note, too, the linking of Papinius to a supposedly Greek word *pape* because the poet was "admirable in wisdom" (*admirabilis in sapientia*, The Royal 15.A.xxix *accessus* to the *Thebaid*, line 14, cited at Anderson [2009] 3.48: see Anderson [2009] 3.47); there was also a connection of the variant, Pampinius, to the vine-leaf (Anderson [2009] 3.22). On the etymology, see also Munk Olsen (2004) 244–5. For Dante's use of it, see Heil (2002) 102–115.

century *Quaeritur accessus* on which the vast majority of medieval *accessus* were based), and as such became part of the reading process:¹³

curritur ad uocem iucundam et carmen amicae
Thebaidos, laetam cum fecit Statius urbem
promisitque diem: tanta dulcedine captos
adficit ille animos tantaque libidine uolgi
auditur. sed cum fregit subsellia uersu
esurit, intactam Paridi nisi uendit Agauen.

JUV. 7.82–7

When Statius has made the city happy and set a date, there is a rush to the pleasant voice and song of his girlfriend Thebais: he entices the enraptured souls with such sweetness and the masses listen with such desire. But when he has broken the benches with his verse, he starves, unless he sells his virgin Agave to Paris.

This comparative lack of external evidence helps explain the importance of Juvenal's portrait in the biographical tradition, something demonstrated by Dante's references to the sweetness of Statius' voice¹⁴ and Erasmus' allusion to Statius' conquest by sweetness (*suaue, in quo uincit Statius, Copia* 1.123) which, in tandem with the etymological tradition, are influenced by Juvenal's description of Statius' sweet and pleasant voice (*tanta dulcedo*, Juv. 7.84; *uocem iucundam*, 82).¹⁵

What autobiographical material there is in the *Silvae* would not have been available to readers between the end of the fifth century and the middle of the fifteenth century when knowledge of the *Silvae* manuscript discovered by Poggio Bracciolini in 1417–1418 had begun to spread.¹⁶ Readers during this

13 As noted by Anderson (2009) 3.11, *accessus* “became the lens through which students would read and learn to read an author.” For the text of *Quaeritur accessus*, see Anderson (2009) 3.6.

14 Cf. Dante *Conv.* 4.25.60 (characterizing Statius as the *dolce* [“sweet”] poet); *Purg.* 21.88 (*tanto fu dolce mio vocale spirto*, “so sweet was the spirit of my verse”). See, e.g., Wicksteed (1921) 177 n. 1; Kleinhenz (1988b) 24; Heil (2002) 87.

15 For the impact of Juvenal's depiction on Dante, see also Newlands (2012) 25; Heslin, pp. 512–26 in this volume. Heil (2002) 83–115 discusses the importance of exegetical material for the interpretation of Dante's poetry.

16 For the slow dissemination of knowledge of the *Silvae*, see H. Anderson (2009) 3.xiv. For delay in the dissemination of the new biographical information, see D. Anderson (1988) 241 n. 9.

period were left with what they could draw from the epics and accompanying exegetical material. This situation led to ignorance of important facts and misconceptions about key aspects of Statius' career. So, for example, lack of knowledge of Statius' Neapolitan origins¹⁷ resulted in acceptance of Statius' misidentification with Statius Ursulus, a rhetorician from Toulouse who was mentioned by Jerome as being active in 56 CE (*Chron.* a. Abr. 2072). Furthermore, although we know from *Silvae* 3.5.31–3 and 5.3.231–2 that Statius did not achieve success in the Capitoline Games, unlike the Alban contest and Neapolitan *Augustalia* (*Silv.* 3.5.28–31, 4.2.65–7, 5.3.225–30), the fourteenth century thought otherwise, as evidenced by the Dantean Statius' reference to a crown of myrtle at Rome (*Purg.* 21.88–90) and Petrarch's *Coronation Oration*, delivered on top of the Capitoline Hill, on the 8th of April, 1341 before the poet received a laurel crown for his literary achievements.¹⁸ Here Petrarch, who mistakenly thought the laurel wreath was given in Capitoline Games, laments the fact that the honor bestowed by Domitian on Statius was discontinued for more than twelve centuries (*post Statium Pampineum, illustrem poetam, qui Domitiani temporibus floruit, nullum legimus tali honore decoratum*, "we read of no poet decorated with such an honor since the illustrious poet Statius Papinius, who flourished in the time of Domitian," *Collatio laureationis* 6.1). Whatever the source of the conviction,¹⁹ for Petrarch at least, Statius' apparent allusions to poetic coronation seem to have fed into this belief. For near the end of the oration he quotes Statius' address to Domitian at *Thebaid* 1.32–3 (*Tempus erit cum laurigero*²⁰ *tua fortior <e>stro / facta canam*, "the time will come when stronger in laurel-bearing frenzy I shall sing your deeds," *Collatio Laureationis* 11.22) and *Achilleid* 1.15–16 (*Cui gemine florent uatumque ducumque / certatim laurus*, "for whom the twin laurels of poet and leaders flourish in rivalry," *Collatio Laureationis* 11.23).

The comparatively little information on Statius from any source must be seen as shaped according to its context, rather than with regard to veracity. We should treat Statius' autobiographical comments with caution: for

17 For which, see, e.g., *Silv.* 3.5.12, 78–82.

18 Cf. also Boccaccio's *Notamentum*, Zibaldone Laurenziano, and *Life of Petrarch* (drawing on Petrarch). For the Capitoline tradition, see Wilkins (1943) 161–2.

19 Wilkins (1943) 162 contends it remains unknown; Heil (2002) 87–8 links the Dantean reference to the assertion (found in the *Achilleid accessus* Firenze BML, plut. 24 sin. 12) that the Theban Statius was crowned and drank from a fountain (itself a literal interpretation of *Achil.* 1.8–10: Anderson [2009] 3.14 n. 49).

20 Modern texts prefer the reading *Pierio*.

example, the one year per book allowed by the twelve-year duration of the *Thebaid's* composition (*Theb.* 12.811–12) has a suspicious neatness. Similarly, we must guard against accepting Juvenal's description at face value. By imagining Statius placing his girlfriend Thebais on show and selling his Agave to Paris, Juvenal depicts him prostituting his talent. This may be seen not so much as a reflection on a real situation, since the *Silvae* suggest Statius had some independent income, but as a picture attuned to the *Satires'* requirements, notably the generic tussle between epic and satire and the theme of a warped patronage system.²¹ Finally, the medieval etymologizing of Statius' name may not lead us closer to the historical figure but it reveals views of the poet in the Middle Ages, illuminates medieval exegetical methods, and illustrates the entwining of biographical information and reception.

Reception and Appropriation

Reception of Statian biographical material is bound up with the use made of his poetry by subsequent writers, as can be seen in the conception of Statius as a client-poet. The idea that Statius is a writer who makes a living from his work is a recurrent aspect of his presentation from Juvenal 7.82–7 onwards. Such an image could provoke censure: in particular, Statius' treatment of Domitian in his poems allowed him to be (unfairly²²) viewed as a court lackey, accepting imperial commissions.²³ However, there was a range of attitudes to Statius' relationship with Domitian²⁴ and the image of Statius as a client-poet could be taken up by writers eager to give voice to their own explorations of the patron-poet relationship. The poetic output of the late antique poet Claudian is modelled in some respects on that of Statius.²⁵ Claudian celebrates the third, fourth, and sixth consulships of the emperor Honorius just as Statius composes

21 On the passage, see, e.g., Braund (1988) 60; Malamud (2001) 41; Markus (2003) 432–3; Newlands (2012) 24–5.

22 Newlands (2012) 20–35.

23 See, e.g., with Mengelkoch (2010b) 9, Dryden, *The Spanish Fryar, or, The Double Discovery* (London 1681) A2–A3, on Statius' apparent complicity in the despotic rule of Domitian; Heslin (2005) xv–xvi. Note also the apparent fall in the popularity of Statius' poetry in the two centuries following his death, which may be connected to his association with the tyrannical Domitian (Dewar [1991] xxxvii).

24 So, for instance, adulation of Domitian could be explained away, as in the cases of the humanist scholars Poliziano (Grafton [199] 35) and Grasserus (Anderson [2009] 3.124 n. 10).

25 For Statius and Claudian, see Kaufmann, pp. 481–96 in this volume.

a poem on the occasion of Domitian's seventeenth consulship (*Silvae* 4.1) while his mythological hexameter poem, *De Raptu Proserpinae*, draws heavily upon Statius' mythological epics²⁶ and his epithalamium for Palladius and Celerina (*Carm. Min.* 25) closely reworks Statius' epithalamium for Stella and Violentilla (*Silv.* 1.2).²⁷ The variety of the Statian output would have been attractive to a poet whose corpus is characterized by a range of tones and styles. But it is the driving force behind the variety of both poets' work, the demands of patronage, which would have rendered Statius an especially appealing model. While Claudian composed for a number of patrons, starting out at court in Milan under the patronage of the Anicii family with his *Panegyricus Dictus Olybrio et Probino Consulibus* (395 CE), he mainly wrote in celebration or support of Stilicho, Honorius' right-hand man, and the imperial family. Conversely, the majority of Statius' poems were written for private patrons among the Roman and Neapolitan elite, such as Lucan's widow, Polla Argentaria. Still, seven out of the twenty-seven *Silvae* published during Statius' lifetime engage with the world of the emperor,²⁸ either directly, as in poems such as *Silvae* 1.1 and 4.2, or indirectly, as in the case of *Silvae* 3.4 on Domitian's favorite, Earinus. The *Silvae* were, as Newlands argues, "the first poems in Latin literature to deal extensively with the relation between the poet and a court circle."²⁹ And as such, they provided an important precedent for Claudian. As we have seen, Statius was no lackey of the emperor's. But his allusions to Domitian in the *Silvae*, alongside his addresses in the epics (*Theb.* 1.17–33, 12.814; *Achil.* 1.14–19), allowed him to be appropriated as a model court poet and imperial panegyricist.

Statius could also be appropriated for his role as writer for non-imperial patrons, as can be seen in Hugo Grotius' poem, *Silva ad Franciscum Augustum Thuanum*, composed in the year in which Grotius escaped Holland and became a political exile in France (1621). Addressed to François-Auguste de Thou and written in remembrance of his father, Jacques-Auguste de Thou, it served as an introduction into the intellectual gathering of the Cabinet Dupuy.³⁰ Grotius closes his poem with a comparison in which he likens himself to a small skiff sailing next to the great merchant ships of the East India company, representative of de Thou and his likes: *sic ubi Atlanteo uela explicuere profundo | Eoum*

26 Cf. Wheeler (1995).

27 Cf. Pavlovskis (1965b) 166.

28 Newlands (2012) 24.

29 Newlands (2002) 22.

30 De Smet (2006) 141. On this site of conversational exchange between the high parliamentary magistracy and learned men "in the spirit of Jacques-Auguste de Thou," see Miller (2000) 68.

Batauis referentes portubus annum / Armigeræ naues, communes detinet Euros / Cymba brevis cernique in eisdem fluctibus audet ("in this way, when the ships equipped with cannons, bringing the harvest of the East to Dutch ports, unfurl their sails on the Atlantic Ocean, a little skiff profits from the same south-east winds, and ventures to be seen in the same waters").³¹ In this passage, as van Dam notes, Grotius combines evocation of *Silvæ* 5.1.242–6 with allusion to lines from *Silvæ* 1.4, Statius' poem to Rutilius Gallicus: *immensæ ueluti conexa carinae / cumba minor, cum saeuit hiems, pro parte furentes / parua receptat aquas et eodem uoluitur austro* ("just as a tiny skiff attached to a great vessel, when the storm rages, takes in its small share of the raging waters and is tossed in the same south wind," *Silv.* 1.4.120–2). Grotius, who takes up an image used by Statius of his patron in the context of fear for his health, here looks beyond these lines to Statius' reference to Rutilius' subsequent death at *Silvæ* 1.1.27–8. With Statius' need for a patron clear in light of this reference, the selection of comparison for imitation resonated with the situation in which the recently exiled Grotius found himself in. As van Dam observes, the choice was especially apt, "for someone who, like the humble poet Statius, with respect to the powerful (and deceased) *praefectus urbi*, tried to carve out a place for himself among new patrons."³²

Acquaintance with the *Silvæ* was clearly important for Statius' appropriation as a fellow client-poet. However, those whose access to information about Statius' relationship with supporters was limited to the epics' addresses to Domitian could also engage with verses which seemed to pertain to Statius' client status.³³ So, for instance, the *Thebaid's* opening appeal to Domitian is used to explore Petrarch's relationship with his patron King Robert. Petrarch, who believed that Statius was crowned with laurel by Domitian, would have seen the possibilities for mapping Domitian onto the king under whose auspices he was crowned poet laureate (*Africa* 19–22). As such it comes as no surprise that he mines the *Thebaid's* prologue at the start of his epic.³⁴ His dedication to King Robert recalls in theme and style Statius' initial speech to Domitian.³⁵

31 See van Dam (2008) 57–8, from which the text and translation are taken.

32 Van Dam (2008) 58.

33 In the Middle Ages, of course, there would have been no access to the adulatory imperial poems which had the potential to engender a negative view of the poet-emperor relationship. Cf. Anderson (2009) 3.124 n. 10, 128 n. 34 on the failure of medieval scholars to see Statius' close association with Domitian as problematic.

34 The engagement is pointed up by the indirect reference to Statius at *Africa* 1.51: *Ille refert Thebas iuuenemque occultat Achillem* ("that one reports on Thebes and hides away young Achilles").

35 Cf. Galligan (2004) 151–2; Ellis (2007) 78.

As Statius does not “dare” (*ausim*, *Theb.* 1.19) to write on Domitian’s feats, so Petrarch does not yet “dare” (*ausus*, *Africa* 1.58) to treat Robert’s “deeds” (*facta*, *Africa* 1.57). And as Statius claims at *Thebaid* 1.32–3 that he will go on to praise Domitian’s “deeds” (*facta*, *Theb.* 1.32), so Petrarch promises future celebration (*Africa* 1.40–70). Furthermore, Statius’ apparent reference to a crowning by Domitian in the context of this future celebration at *Thebaid* 1.32–3³⁶ is picked up by Petrarch’s vision of himself earning a second laureation in the presence of Robert (*Africa* 1.62–4). Statius allows Petrarch a voice with which to address his patron and offers him a precedent for the deferral of imperial praise.

Another strand of the reception of Statius’ persona concerned his status as a bilingual poet. As we learn from the *Silvae*, Statius was born in the Hellenized city of Naples, to a father who hailed from the Greek city of Velia in southern Italy (*Silv.* 5.3.127). Furthermore, he learnt poetic composition from his father (209–14), a professional poet and a *grammaticus*, who worked first in Naples and then Rome where he educated the sons of the elite in Roman religion (176–84) and Greek poetry (146–58).³⁷ While modern scholarship is increasingly recognizing the importance of Greco-Roman culture to Statius’ poetry,³⁸ anyone who could encounter the *Silvae* will have brought to their understanding of Statius some awareness of his philhellenism. Such consciousness is typically absent in the medieval audience whose lack of access to the *Silvae* contributed to their belief that the poet was of French origin. As readers aware of Statius’ Neapolitan background, we come to his poems with a very different expectation to that of the reader who believes the author is French. Statius references the Greek authors in his father’s curriculum as part of his strategy of poetic self-presentation. We respond with a heightened sensitivity to his bilingual wordplay and deployment of Greek intertexts.³⁹

Knowledge of Statius’ philhellenism was important for those readers who were themselves authors. Consciousness of an author’s environment can shape the way his writing is received and put to work. Statius’ apparently French origins are, for example, exploited by the thirteenth-century poet John of Garland, who quotes four lines from “Statius Tholosanus” in the context of

36 See above, p. 468.

37 For the elder Statius and his pedagogical activity, see McNelis (2002).

38 See, e.g., Newlands (2012) 5–8 *et passim* for an exploration of the bicultural setting and dynamics of Statius’ work.

39 For bilingual puns, see, e.g., Keith (2008). For engagement with Greek texts in the *Thebaid*, see, e.g., McNelis (2007) (on Callimachus) and Hutchinson (2013) 351–4 (on epinician poetry).

speaking of his own studies at the university of Toulouse.⁴⁰ Statius' presentation of himself in the *Silvae* as a poet working within a Greco-Roman milieu impacted his appropriation by writers who were aware of this self-positioning. We have seen how Statius' appeal as a model for Claudian lay partly in the apparent similarities of the writers' court milieu. The poets' shared philhellenism was another similarity in socio-cultural setting ready to be exploited. Claudian, who was well-versed in the *Silvae*, was familiar with Statius' acknowledgements of his Greek background, as shown by his nod to the elder Statius' curriculum in the list of authors taught by Serena to her daughter Maria in his *Epithalamium Dictum Honorio et Mariae*.⁴¹ Furthermore, he would have recognized in Statius an immersion in the Greek epideictic rhetorical tradition akin to his own.⁴² Part of the attraction of Statius as a poetic model for Claudian lay precisely in his Greco-Roman identity. An immigrant from the Greek-speaking eastern Empire whose poetic output included Greek epigrams and a Greek Gigantomachy, Claudian advertises his biculturalism, claiming to Probinus that it was in his consulship that he first drank "Roman fountains" (*Carm. Min.* 41.13) and his "Greek Thalia yielded to a Latin toga" (*Latiae cessit Graia Thalia togae*, 14).⁴³ Statius offered Claudian a precedent for his mediation of the dialogue between Greek and Latin traditions.

Following the rediscovery of the *Silvae*, readers again began to appreciate the importance of the Greek context of Statius' works. The *Vita Statii* included in Pomponius Laetus' commentary on the *Thebaid*, composed sometime between spring 1469 and July 1471, notes that Statius' father was learned in both Greek and Latin (*Vita Statii* 12) and acknowledges the importance of the Greek tradition, although the only Greek in the commentary is etymological in nature.⁴⁴ More important for the recognition of Greek context is the work done by Poliziano, the fifteenth-century academic-poet whose engagement with Statius is evident in both his scholarship and his literary writings such as his *Silvae*, poetical introductions to the literature courses he taught.⁴⁵

40 *Achil.* 1.798–802, quoted in his *De Triumphis Ecclesiae*, Wright (1856) 97; cf. Barreda Edo (2010) 34.

41 Two of the three authors mentioned at *Epith. Hon. et Mar.* 232–5 (Homer, Sappho) appear at *Silv.* 5.3.148–50 and 154–5.

42 For Statius and *epideixis*, see A. Hardie (1983) 74–102; for Claudian, see, e.g., Ware (2012) 23–4.

43 For Claudian's biculturalism, see Hinds (2013) 172–4.

44 Anderson (2009) 3.107. For the *Vita Statii* text, see Anderson (2009) 3.110.

45 See further Mengelkoch, pp. 562–78 in this volume. Statius' *Silvae* were the subject of Poliziano's first lecture course in 1480–1481. For his scholarly work on Statius, see van Dam (2008) 45. Poliziano's *Silvae* not only showed the influence of Statius' *Silvae* in title and

Poliziano's commentary on Statius' *Silvae*, left incomplete at his death, reveals his awareness of the importance of Greek literature to these poems.⁴⁶ His exegesis of Statius' work also shows his recognition of the Greek epideictic tradition behind his poems: for instance, in his *In Epithalamion Stellae, Sylvam Secundam* he includes Menander Rhetor's chapter on the Wedding Speech and considers the poem's place in the epideictic tradition.⁴⁷ Mengelkoch argues that in the composition of his commentary, Poliziano realized the parallels between his own and Statius' outputs, one of which was intellectual: "both recognize and privilege the inheritance of Greek poetry over that of Latin, with the exception of Vergil."⁴⁸ Certainly, Poliziano's engagement with Greek texts is key, as reflected in his scholarship⁴⁹ and poetry,⁵⁰ and through his exegetical work on Statius, he could advertise a precedent for his own incorporation of Greek and Roman traditions.

We have so far seen how material regarding Statius' philhellenism and client-poet persona could be appropriated by Statius' successors. However, it is his poems' self-reflexive moments which later writers were most receptive to. Authors engaged in the crafting of their poetic stance saw the appeal of Statius' presentation of his literary career. Thus, for example, in his *De Bello Troiano*, the twelfth-century poet Joseph of Exeter advertised the Christian direction of his future work on the crusades through exploitation of Statius' metapoetical musings. At the end of his epic, which was completed in 1190, Joseph claims "now the wars of Antioch call, which must be sung with greater plectrum" (*plectro maiore canenda, | Anthiochi nunc bella uocant, De Bello* 6.962–3). This picks up his earlier promise of a future epic on the crusades: Baldwin will be worthy of a "greater trumpet" (*maiore tuba*, 1.58), when "sacred strife" (*diuina . . . bella*, 57) claims him. Joseph's epilogue clearly reworks the *Thebaid's* ending: so, for instance, Joseph references his mourning (*lamentata*, "wailings," 6.959) of Troy's fall in a way that nods to the *Thebaid's* closural emphasis on grief (*lamentata, Theb.* 12.793), and models his phrase *uenit impleturus Apollo* ("Apollo comes, about to fill," *De Bello* 6.967) on *Thebaid* 12.808: *ueniensque implesset Apollo* ("Apollo, with his presence, would have filled").⁵¹ And so he

genre, but also engaged with Statius' other works such as the *Thebaid* (cf., e.g., *Theb.* 1.3–4 with *Manto* 39–40) and *Achilleid* (cf. Lauletta [2001] on *Manto*).

46 Cf. Mengelkoch (2010b) 24.

47 See Harsting (2001) 14–15.

48 Mengelkoch (2010b) 23.

49 For his scholarship as incorporating Greek and Roman poetry, see Mengelkoch (2010b) 16.

50 Cf. the two poems in his *Silvae* concerning Homer and Hesiod.

51 See Gärtner (1999) 341.

follows Statius in enjoining his book to “live” and similarly ends the work with references to envy.⁵²

However, the epilogue also draws on Statius’ other personal statements. Joseph uses *confusa* (“jumbled,” 6.960) to describe the abridged accounts of ancient truth he has thus far unfolded, prior to his projected epic on the crusades, just as Statius applies *confusa* (“disordered,” *Theb.* 1.17) to the house of Oedipus, the subject matter of his current song, as opposed to the imperial panegyric he does not yet dare. This is shortly followed by his claim *Tendo fila lire* (“I tune the strings of the lyre,” *De Bello* 6.962), which looks to Statius’ announcement *nunc tendo chelyn* from the prologue of the *Thebaid* (“now I tune the lyre,” 1.33).⁵³ Furthermore, Joseph engages with the language of intensification evident in Statius’ poetic self-reflection. The need for a change in key in the treatment of Capaneus’ gigantomachic ascent, already noted at *Thebaid* 1.45 (*alio Capaneus horrore canendus*, “Capaneus must be sung with another horror”), is emphasized in *Thebaid* 10: “a greater madness” (*maior . . . amentia*, 10.830) must be demanded from the Muses, for although “thus far” (*hactenus*, 827) the matter has been “arms” (*arma*, 827), “now” (*nunc*, 827), Capaneus’ theomachic actions must be treated and a new manner must be adopted.⁵⁴ Escalatory language also occurs in the book 8 announcement that fraternal war requires a higher authority, a “mightier Apollo,” than the muse Calliope (*sed iam bella uocant: alias noua suggere uires, / Calliope, maiorque chelyn mihi tendat Apollo*, “but now war summons: supply new strength afresh, Calliope, and let a mightier Apollo tune my lyre,” 8.373–4), and such rhetoric is reworked at the close of the epic where the poet admits that the inspiration provided by Apollo can “barely” (*uix*) suffice to describe the lamentation (12.808). Joseph adapts this language to underline the change from pagan to Christian epic. The sorrows of Troy sung “thus far” (*hactenus*, 6.959) are to be exchanged for the wars of Antioch which “must be sung” (*canenda*, 962) with a greater plectrum. It is a Christian crusade, *Christicolas acies* (964), that requires intensification, rather than the theomachic actions of Capaneus or fraternal conflict (*fraternas acies*, *Theb.* 1.1). What is more, Joseph may proceed precisely because of his heavenly inspiration, his *Celsior . . . Apollo* (“loftier Apollo,” *De Bello* 6.967), in contrast to Statius’ *maior . . . Apollo* (*Theb.* 8.374) who proves inadequate.

52 Cf. *De Bello* 6.974 (*uiue*) with *Theb.* 12.816 and *De Bello* 6.973–9 with *Theb.* 12.818–19; see Gärtner (1999) 344. This is one of many literary instances of engagement with the *Thebaid* sphragis: see, e.g., Kytzler (2007) and Edwards, pp. 497–511 in this volume.

53 Gärtner (1999) 340.

54 “No longer may I sing in the usual way of poets” (*Theb.* 10.829 *non mihi iam solito uatum de more canendum*). Cf. Hardie (2013) 135.

Writers engaged in the shaping of their poetic stance were also drawn to Statius' positioning of his work within a poetic tradition. Statius presents himself as an epigonal poet: in particular, he figures himself as a successor to Vergil. This is clear from such sections of the *Silvae* as 4.4.54–5 where Statius depicts himself singing at Vergil's tomb, as well as two passages in the *Thebaid*: the address to Hopleus and Dymas at 10.445–8, which looks to the Nisus and Euryalus episode of *Aeneid* 9, and *Thebaid* 12.816–17, where Statius urges his poem: *nec tu diuinam Aeneida tempta, | sed longe sequere et uestigia semper adora* ("do not make an attempt on the divine *Aeneid* but follow afar and ever worship its footsteps").⁵⁵ Engagement with Statius' musing on his relationship with Vergil is apparent in prose works, as can be seen in the case of the *Super Thebaiden*, a twelfth-century allegorical reading of the *Thebaid* in imitation of Fulgentius' etymological exposition of the *Aeneid*, the *Vergiliana Continentia*.⁵⁶ Pseudo-Fulgentius was well aware of Statius' ties to Vergil, as his description of the author of the *Thebaid* as "the faithful emulator of Vergil's *Aeneid*" (*Virgilianae Eneidis fidus imitator*)⁵⁷ reveals. His very choice of the *Thebaid* for exposition engages with that text's positioning of itself as a successor to the *Aeneid*:⁵⁸ just as the *Thebaid* followed the *Aeneid*, so the *Thebaid* commentary follows Vergilian exegesis.

There are other examples of prose writers engaging with Statius' presentation of his relationship with Vergil: so, for example, Statius' contemporary Quintilian may well be alluding to the injunction in *Thebaid* 12.817 to "follow" (*sequere*) the *Aeneid* "from afar" (*longe*) in his dismissive comment regarding "the following from afar" of post-Vergilian epicists (*ceteri omnes longe sequentur*, "all the others will follow from afar," *Inst.* 10.1.87).⁵⁹ However, the appropriation of Statius' epigonal positioning is particularly apparent in the poetic tradition, as illustrated by the work of the late third-century writer, Nemesianus. Near the end of Nemesianus' first *Eclogue*, the character Tityrus (standing for Vergil and perhaps the pastoral succession more broadly)⁶⁰ urges Timetas (Nemesianus)⁶¹ not to abandon the "song he has begun" (*coepitum . . . carmen*, Nemes. *Ecl.* 1.81). Tityrus continues: "for you sing so sweet that a favorable Apollo carries you forward and is your auspicious guide into the

55 On the self-conscious "secondariness" of such passages, see Hinds (1998) 91–5; on *Theb.* 12.816–17 cf. Dominik (2003) 94–6.

56 On the dating, see Hays (2002).

57 Sweeney (1997) 698.

58 Cf. Whitbread (1971) 235.

59 Cf. Slater (1908) 31.

60 Hubbard (1998) 178 n. 57.

61 Hubbard (1998) 178 n. 57.

capital city (*Nam sic dulce sonas ut te placatus Apollo / prouehat et felix dominam perducatur in urbem*, 82–3). As in Alcon's claim in *Eclogue* 2 to sing on the flute by which Tityrus (Vergil) "spoke sweetly and advanced from the woodland to the capital city" (*dulce locutus / . . . e siluis dominam peruenit in urbem*, 2.83–4),⁶² Nemesianus here evokes some lines from a passage of Calpurnius Siculus concerning Vergil's career ascent up the poetic hierarchy (Calp. *Ecl.* 4.160–3). There, in a nod to Tityrus' meeting with a divine young man in Rome in Vergil's *Eclogue* 1, Corydon (Calpurnius)⁶³ is made to claim that Meliboeus, as a patron with the potential to open up imperial circles, will be to him "like the one who brought the sweetly sounding Tityrus from the woods to the capital city" (*qualis qui dulce sonantem / Tityron e siluis dominam deduxit in urbem*, Calp. *Ecl.* 4.160–1). Nemesianus' engagement with the bucolic tradition continues in the last two lines of the poem which detail a typically Vergilian return to pastoral menial tasks and a closural shadow motif (Nemes. *Ecl.* 1.86–7).⁶⁴ Sandwiched between these two pastoral passages, however, comes engagement with the *Thebaid*. The journey image of *Eclogue* 1.83 (*prouehat et . . . perducatur*) is continued in line 85 (*strauit iter*), mirroring Statius' own development of path imagery at *Thebaid* 12.813 (*strauit iter*) and 817 (*sequere et uestigia . . . adora*). Furthermore, Nemesianus closely echoes the Statian sphragis. *Eclogue* 1.84–5 (*Namque hic in siluis praesens tibi Fama benignum / strauit iter, rumpens liuoris nubila pennis*, "for attendant Fame has here in the woods laid a favorable path for you, piercing the clouds of envy with her wings") conjoins the reference to clouds and envy at *Thebaid* 12.818 (*tibi si quis adhuc praetendit nubila liuor*, "if any envy still spreads clouds before you") with a reworking of Statius' claim to literary renown at 12.812–13 (*iam certe praesens tibi Fama benignum / strauit iter coepitque nouam monstrare futuris*, "surely attendant Fame has already laid a favorable path for you and has begun to show you in your youth to future generations").⁶⁵

Nemesianus' evocation of the end of Statius' martial epic *Thebaid*, a work labored over for twelve years (*Theb.* 12.811), may initially seem surprising. Not only does the echo come towards the close of the first poem consisting of a mere eighty seven lines but a prominent echo of a martial epic appears within a pastoral corpus. Yet the move is a calculated one. Allusion to a passage which explicitly muses upon the author's literary relationship with Vergil befits a poem so self-conscious about its place in a post-Vergilian poetic tradition. The echo also contributes to the self-aggrandizing tone of this

62 For Tityrus as Vergil here, see Karakasis (2011) 318 n. 108.

63 Karakasis (2011) 245 n. 27.

64 Cf. Karakasis (2011) 274.

65 Cf. H.J. Williams (1986) 4.

section. Nemesianus' ending shows remarkable assurance, as evidenced by his adaptation of the Calpurnian lines. While Corydon-Calpurnius' emulation of Tityrus-Vergil depends upon his patron's actions, Nemesianus' Vergilian figure gives clear indication that the poet's abilities ensure his entrance into the city. Nemesianus' reworking of the *Thebaid* passage displays similar confidence. The Statian idea of following from a distance is omitted. Instead, the Vergilian figure appears within the poem and his words signal that his successor follows in his footsteps. Furthermore, the intertext allows Nemesianus to appropriate for pastoral the air of prestige borne by a high genre. Nemesianus is well aware of the generic hierarchy, as shown by his engagement with the Vergilian career progression up the ranks in his subsequent move to didactic epic in the *Cynegetica* and the prospectus for an imperial military epic outlined in this work (*Cyn.* 63–85).⁶⁶ The pastoral genre, as well as its practitioner, is aggrandized by the engagement with the epic *Thebaid*.

Some eleven centuries later, in the last book of Petrarch's epic *Africa*, we find a very different appropriation of Statius' epigonal poetic stance. Petrarch exploits the *Thebaid* in the construction of his poetic self-representation and exploration of literary genealogy, as may be seen in the Petrarchan Ennius' narration of his dream meeting with Homer's shade and encounter with the future poet Petrarch in book 9. Ennius' description of himself as "following the sparse footsteps of Fame" (*Vestigia Fame / Rara sequens, Africa* 9.133–4) evokes the journey imagery of *Thebaid* 12.816–17⁶⁷ and thus associates Ennius with Statius who tracks the steps of Vergil. This alignment of Ennius with Statius is reinforced by means of allusion to Dante's *Commedia*. By depicting his character as a shade under a laurel tree (*Africa* 9.216–19), Petrarch foreshadows his coronation of 1431⁶⁸ and thereby authoritatively adds himself to a line of poetic succession involving Homer and Ennius.⁶⁹ Although Dante is polemically excluded from this line,⁷⁰ Petrarch does obliquely evoke the way his rival positioned himself as the literary successor to Vergil and Statius

66 Karakasis (2011) 318 n. 107 has, in fact, suggested that this very passage from *Eclogue* 1 serves to conjure a sense of "generic transcendence" towards the urban genre epic, like its Calpurnian model.

67 So Hardie (2012) 479.

68 Cf. *Africa* 9.237–8: *seroque triumpho / tandem ascendet Capitolia uestra* ("in a late triumph at last he will climb your Capitol").

69 See Brownlee (2005) 480–1.

70 Cf. Brownlee (2005) 481: "Petrarch would then be the equally 'foundational' poet of *renovatio*, of the new classical/modern epic of the Italian fourteenth century, continuing and recovering the lineage of the *auctores* in a present which does not and cannot include Dante and the *Commedia*."

through the two poets' encounter in *Purgatorio* 21–22.⁷¹ Through allusion to Dante's text, Petrarch maps his Homer onto the Dantean Vergil and Ennius onto the Dantean Statius:⁷² so, for example, Ennius' recollection of his attempt to embrace Homer's feet (*Procubui uoluique pedes contingere pronus: / Umbra fuit nudeque heserunt oscula terre*, "I leaned forward and, bending, wished to touch his feet. He was a shade, and my kisses fell on the bare earth," *Africa* 9.178–9) looks to Statius' reaction to Vergil at Dante, *Purgatorio* 21.130–2 (*Già s'inchinava ad abbracciar li piedi / al mio dottor, ma el li disse: "Frate, non far: / ché tu se' ombra e ombra vedi"*, "already he was bending to embrace my teacher's feet, but he told him, 'Brother, do not, for you are a shade and a shade you see'"). In light of the poem's figuration of Petrarch as "another Ennius" (*Ennius alter*, *Africa* 2.443), the alignment between Ennius and Statius opens up a connection between Petrarch and Statius.

The idea that Petrarch is a follower of Statius, as well as Ennius, is developed towards the end of the poem. In a move which befits his self-construction as Ennius' successor, Petrarch applies the words *uestigia rara* to his own literary journey: *Ipse ego ter centum labentibus ordine lustris / Dumosam tentare uiam et uestigia rara / Viribus imparibus fidens utcumque peregi* ("I myself, after fifteen hundred years glided past in order, trusting in my unequal abilities to attempt the thorny path and sparse footprints, have somehow succeeded," *Africa* 9.404–6). Even taking into account medieval intertexts, such as Alan of Lille's own take on the Statian envoi at *Anticlaudianus* 9.412–14 (*nec antiquos temptes equare poetas, / Sed potius ueterum uestigia semper adorans / Subsequere*, "and do not attempt to equal the ancient poets but rather in reverence ever follow after the footprints of the ancients"⁷³), it is clear that these lines rework the *Thebaid's* path imagery,⁷⁴ especially given their reference to the Capitoline coronation, an event in which Petrarch believed himself Statius' successor. Petrarch then continues to mine the *Thebaid* envoi, modelling his address to his poem at *Africa* 9.421–2 (*O mea non paruo michi consummata labore / Africa!*, "O my *Africa*, finished by me with no little toil!") on Statius' apostrophe to his work at *Thebaid* 12.811–12 (*o mihi bis senos multum uigilata per annos / Thebai*, "O my *Thebaid*, on which I worked at great length well into the night over a dozen years").⁷⁵ Furthermore, Statius' assertion of the death of envy and belief in future honors at *Thebaid* 12.818–19 lies behind *Africa* 9.453–65.⁷⁶

71 For Dante's genealogical positioning, see, e.g., Brownlee (2005) 468.

72 See Velli (1985) 194–6; Galligan (2007) 88–9.

73 So Galligan (2004) 153.

74 Cf. Galligan (2004) 153–5.

75 Cf. Murphy (1997) 124.

76 Hardie (2012) 483.

Statius' poetic self-fashioning offered Petrarch space to shape his literary persona in new directions. The poet, whose compositional pains are highlighted at *Thebaid* 12.811–12, could act as a model of stylistic refinement, unlike the seemingly *rusticus* Ennius (*Africa* 4.38).⁷⁷ Furthermore, while Ennius' modernizing persona enabled Petrarch to style himself as following in his foundational footsteps,⁷⁸ Statius' pose of humble imitation proved attractive to a poet who staged his own deferential relationship with the classical tradition. The figure of Vergil, considered by Petrarch to be the supreme Roman poet,⁷⁹ is nowhere evoked in the *Africa*, despite pervasive echoes of the *Aeneid*.⁸⁰ One cannot imagine Petrarch showing himself in direct communication with his model, even without the shadow of the Dantean precedent. The figures of the Greek poet Homer and Ennius, whose work was then available in fragments, are conjured in a dream, exemplifying Petrarch's tendency to create a sense of distance or exclusion from the company of classical poets.⁸¹ Statius portrayed himself as venerator and emulator of his predecessor from afar, as Petrarch notes in his reference to Statius' humble testimony concerning Vergil's *Aeneid*, "whose far off tracks he advises his *Thebaid* . . . to follow and to worship" (*cuius longa sequenda et adoranda uestigia Thebaidem suam . . . admonet*, *Epist. Fam.* 3.18.6). As such he provided a fruitful model for a poet concerned with the distance between himself and his models.

Thus access to the same biographical matter could result in very different appropriations, as authors reworked personal material in line with their own specific concerns: the self-assurance of Nemesianus and the self-doubting pose of Petrarch both come out of Statius' deferential stance towards Vergil. Moreover, as the possibilities for perceiving Statius changed, so did the use to which his work was put. John of Garland could use Statius as a man from Toulouse when it was thought he came from France while Poliziano could advertise Statius' Greek connections, known from the *Silvae*, to provide literary justification for his own poetic interests. And the same ties to Domitian that fed into Dryden's scorning of Statius as a model⁸² enabled Claudian to establish Statius as his predecessor in imperial panegyric.

77 For the perception of Ennius' stylistic roughness, see Goldschmidt (2012) 13 n. 46.

78 See Brownlee (2005) 481, quoted above, for Petrarch's renewal of epic.

79 See, e.g., *Rerum Memorandum* 2.16.1–2.

80 For the *Africa*'s engagement with the *Aeneid*, see, e.g., Kallendorf (1989) 19–57.

81 Cf. Laird (2010) 145. For Petrarch's lack of full access to Homer and Ennius, see Hardie (2012) 475–6.

82 On which, see further Mengelkoch, pp. 562–78 in this volume, who focuses on Dryden's stylistic objections to Statius.

Papinius Noster: Statius in Roman Late Antiquity

Helen Kaufmann

Statius' works were a major influence on the Latin poetry of late antiquity.¹ Poets such as Ausonius, Claudian, Dracontius, and Sidonius Apollinaris drew on Statius' language, imagery, themes, plots, and genres to create their own poems. In addition, the *Thebaid* received its own commentary in late antiquity, and Statius' epics were also used as illustrations for grammar rules as well as for historical and mythological information in commentaries on other authors, in grammatical treatises, and occasionally by other prose writers.

In this chapter, it will be argued that Statius started to be used in the most varied and creative ways in the second half of the fourth century CE by both poets and scholars, who are likely to have influenced each other's interests in the poet, within one geographical region (for example, Gaul) as well as across the Roman empire. For Statius' reception in poetry, Claudian emerges as a key figure, whereas among scholars Servius had a decisive role in shaping the use of Statius' works. Finally, an important difference between the poets' and prose writers' uses of Statius' works is the almost complete neglect of the *Silvae* by the latter. This may help to explain the separate manuscript transmission of Statius' short poems and their loss at the end of antiquity.

Reception Objects and Reception Modes

As in every study of literary influence or reception it is important to define what part or aspect of an earlier writer's works later authors used or "received" ("object") and how they marked their uses ("mode").² For example, when

1 Broad surveys are provided by Valmaggì (1893); Pavlovskis (1962) (*non uidi*); Hill (2002); and Cameron (2011) 399–420. Specific Statian "reception objects" in late antiquity, not taken into account in this chapter, are discussed by Pavlovskis (1965a); Aricò (1983); Laguna (1992) 33–6; Gärtner (2001a) and (2001b) 242–6. For the reception of Statius by individual writers not discussed in this chapter, see Marcovich (1988) 57 *et passim* in his *apparatus similitum* (for the *Alcestis Barcinonensis*); Kroll (1891) 58–60 (for Symmachus); and Blomgren (1950); Dewar (1997); Roberts (2001) 303–4 and (2009) 97, 320 (for Venantius Fortunatus).

2 The terms "reception object" and "reception mode" are mine.

Dracontius writes *uentum erat ad Thebas* ("they came to Thebes," *Rom.* 10.366) for Jason and Medea's journey, using the phrase with which Statius had described the journey of Mercury and Laius' shade (*Theb.* 2.65), he uses a Statian clause ("reception object") and does so by quoting it literally ("reception mode"). In a different reception mode, poets modify quotations. For instance, when Sidonius Apollinaris has Apollo ask Bacchus, *num forte nocentes, / Bacche, petis Thebas?* ("are you, by any chance, going to blameworthy Thebes?," *Carm.* 22.86–7), this is based upon Tisiphone's question to Pietas in Statius, *nunc sera nocentes, / defendis Thebas?* ("are you now, at this late point, defending blameworthy Thebes?," *Theb.* 11.486–7). In the same way, other reception objects, such as imagery, scenes, and plot elements can be combined with these and various other reception modes, such as explicit indications of the source, parallels in narrative sequence, and references to Statius as an authority.

Both in poetry and prose, literal and modified quotations appear as the predominant reception modes, not least because they are easier to find than any other modes. However, in prose it is often uncertain whether modified quotations are based on a variation in the transmission of Statius' works, or whether they have been modified intentionally; whereas, in poetry, there is often more than just a Statian line behind a quotation, so that it can be difficult to define it as a simple allusion. For instance, should the line ending *ipso in limine regem* (Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 18.416) be considered an appropriation of Statius' *maestique ad limina regis* (*Theb.* 3.592), of Vergil's *saeuique in limine regis* (*Aen.* 12.849), his *ipso in limine portae* (*Aen.* 2.242), or of all of these? Because of the close parallels to the Vergilian line endings, Statius clearly cannot be seen to be the only source of inspiration here. Should he even be taken into account? This example shows some of the methodological complexities behind studies of influence/reception/use, especially in late antiquity, as the number of potential sources by that time is considerable, and multiple allusions have become less a matter of choice than one of necessity because it is often impossible to allude, for instance, to Statius only without alluding, or at least appearing to allude, to Vergil as well. It is against the background of such complexities that the following discussion of examples should be read.

Statius in the Latin Poetry of Late Antiquity

It was not until the fourth century CE that the poets made use of Statius' works for their own poems. This period is generally known for its rich poetic production, particularly in comparison with the second and third centuries.

While the preference for archaic literature, particularly prominent in the second century, had disappeared by the mid-fourth century, the second half of the fourth century was characterized by the shift from “Augustan” to “post-Augustan” poets of late antiquity, that is, from poets whose language and style was predominantly influenced by those of the Augustan period (e.g., Paulinus of Nola, Prudentius) to poets who preferred the poetry of the first century CE as their models (e.g., Claudian, Sidonius Apollinaris, Dracontius).³ Statius’ poetry was used in late antiquity by both “Augustan” and, more frequently and in more varied ways, “post-Augustan” poets, and while these categories are artificial, they help to identify Claudian, possibly inspired by Ausonius,⁴ as the trendsetter for the increased interest in Statius’ poetry by the later poets.

Statius in “Augustan” Poetry of Late Antiquity

While Paulinus of Nola, a student of Ausonius before he became a Christian, has made use of Statian expressions in his poetry, his language is influenced by Vergil far more extensively than by any other poet.⁵ For example, the *Index Locorum* in the second edition of Paulinus’ works by de Hartel⁶ includes sixteen pages of Vergilian reminiscences, compared to just one page of Statian echoes, and among the thirty-one entries for Statius, there are many expressions that are also attested in Vergil and other pre-Statian authors, such as Ovid.⁷

As in Paulinus’ case, no other poet’s influence is more pervasive in the hexameter poetry of Prudentius than Vergil’s, with the *Aeneid* providing particularly numerous parallels.⁸ However, for other reception objects such as dramatic scenes or the technique of allegory, Prudentius made use of Statius’

3 See Cameron (2011) 399–405 for the replacement of the archaizing movement by so-called “Silver Age” aesthetics, which, in Gaul, he sees completed by the mid-fourth century. According to his account, there are no “Augustan” poets of late antiquity, and consequently no shift from them to the “post-Augustans.”

4 Cf. Green (1991) xxxii.

5 Cf. Green (1971) 41–6, 49. Juvenecus and Sedulius could be described in a similar way, mainly Vergilian in language, but with occasionally uses of Statius; see Green (2006) 53–67, 209–10 and, for Juvenecus, also Cameron (2001) 402–3. In Arator’s case, Lucan seems to have been rather more influential than Vergil, with Statius still playing a minor role; see Green (2006) 329–31.

6 De Hartel (1999).

7 For example, compare *unum de multis opus admirabile numine Christi* (Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 18.208) with *opus admirabile semper / oderat* (Stat. *Theb.* 6.65–6) and *huius ut aspicerent opus admirabile, saepe* (Ov. *Met.* 6.14).

8 Lühken (2002) 299 refers to more than 600 parallels from the *Aeneid* compared to nearly 200 parallels from the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* combined.

Thebaid.⁹ An example of the reception of a scene can be found in *Peristephanon* 3, an account of the martyrdom of the 12 year-old girl Eulalia, who ran away from home to walk up to the praetor, confess her faith and meet her death. The description of her journey through the difficult stretches of land, at night and on her own (*Perist.* 3.33–55) contains echoes from Vergil's *Aeneid* 6,¹⁰ but, more significantly, parallels and differences from Statius' account of Argia's nocturnal search for her dead husband's body (*Theb.* 12.228–90).¹¹ Through the comparison, the divine guidance and support that Eulalia receives are particularly emphasized: a host of angels guides her and provides bright light, whereas Argia is accompanied by only her old servant and has a single torch. This contrasts the divine help that Eulalia receives with Argia's own achievement, in a world where the gods have largely abandoned human beings. Thus, the Statian model contributes significantly to the interpretation of Prudentius' scene, in ways different from the underworld atmosphere evoked by the Vergilian echoes.

A similar combination of Vergilian language and Statian influence can be found in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. The first line of the short epic refers very closely to Vergil: *Christe, graues hominum semper miserate labores* ("Christ, you who have always had compassion for the heavy toil of humankind," Prudent. *Psych.* 1) and *Phoebe, grauis Troiae semper miserate labores* ("Phoebus, you who have always had compassion for the heavy toils of Troy," Verg. *Aen.* 6.56). The

9 The former has been argued by Hoffmann (2001), the latter by Lewis (1936) 48–56.

10 E.g., *et rude pectus anhelat deo / femina prouocat arma uirum* (Prudent. *Perist.* 3.34–5) and *sed pectus anhelum / et rabie fera corda tument* (Verg. *Aen.* 6.48–9); *per loca senta situ* (Prudent. *Perist.* 3.47) and *per loca senta situ* (Verg. *Aen.* 6.462).

11 E.g., *angelico comitata choro / et, licet horrida nox sileat, / lucis habet tamen illa duces*. / *sic habuit generosa patrum / turba columniferum radium, / scindere qui tenebrosa potens / nocte uiam facie perspicua / praestitit intereunte chaos* ("Accompanied by a host of angels she enjoys the company of light despite the grim, silent night. In this way the noble throng of our fathers had a pillar-shaped beam which could cut through darkness and at night provided a path with its bright torch-like light not allowing gloom to persist," Prudent. *Perist.* 3.48–55) and *et errantem comitis solacia flammae / destituunt gelidaeque facem uicere tenebrae* ("the comfort of her accompanying flame left her as she was lost in wandering and the cold darkness was stronger than her torch," Stat. *Theb.* 12.241–2), *modo nox magis ipsa tacebat, / solaue nigrantes laxabant astra tenebras. / horruit Argia* ("just now the night itself was even more silent, and the stars alone made the black darkness less intense. Argia shuddered," 12.253–5), *nocte sub infesta, nullo duce et hoste propinquo* ("in hostile night, without a companion to lead her and the enemy close by," 12.282). Cf. Hoffmann (2001).

Aeneid, in particular its battle scenes and the description of the underworld in book 6, has left many traces in the *Psychomachia*.

However, one feature that is clearly more Statian than Vergilian is Prudentius' personification allegory. In the seven consecutive duels between virtues and vices, all of the fighters are female figures, each with a set of armor, weapons, and strategy that reflect the nature of her virtue or vice. Statius was not the first to use personifications, but he went much further than Vergil and Ovid in order to describe characters' states of mind and actions in terms of personification allegories. For instance, the abstract qualities that Aeneas meets in the underworld do not act at all, whereas Pietas loses her strength when the brothers in *Thebaid* 11 do not listen to the women's appeals, and are in this way hostile to her.¹² Thus, unlike in earlier epic, allegorical interpretation in Statius' *Thebaid* becomes imperative, and the same is true of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. In addition, the duel between Libido and Pudicitia in the *Psychomachia* contains parallels to the fight between Tisiphone and Pietas in the *Thebaid*: Tisiphone and Libido use torches and aim for the faces of their enemy, both of whom are described as *pudibunda* ("modest").¹³ This is not only another example of the reception of a scene, but also that of a poetic device, personification allegory, which Prudentius turned into a hermeneutic technique: the *Psychomachia* is wholly contained in its allegories.

A similarly deep engagement with Statius combined with thoroughly Vergilian language can be observed in Ausonius' poetry. He wrote a *cento* composed entirely of lines and half-lines taken from Vergil's poetry, which gives evidence of his thorough knowledge of Vergil. However, his poetry is also much influenced by other poets, such as Horace, Martial, Lucan, and Statius.¹⁴ Two features characterize Ausonius' engagement with Statius' poetry: passages with consecutive allusions to the same Statian poem, and at the same time a decisive departure in content from the model passages. This can

12 Cf. Feeney (1991) 387–8.

13 Compare *et ultro / uitantem aspectus etiam pudibundaque longe / ora reducentem premit astridentibus hydrys / intentatque faces* ("and while [Pietas] was trying to avoid even looking at her and to draw her face far back in modesty, [Tisiphone] pressed on with her hissing serpents and brandished her torches," Stat. *Theb.* 11.492–5) and *piceamque ardenti sulphure pinum / ingerit in faciem pudibundaque lumina flammis / adpetit* ("[Libido] brandished her torch of pitch and burning sulfur towards [Pudicitia's] face, aiming at her modest face with the flames," Prudent. *Psych.* 43–5). Cf. Lewis (1936) 48–56 and Feeney (1991) 337–391.

14 Cf. Green (1977) 442–6 and (1991) xx–xxi. Hill (2002) 8–21 critically discusses many of the parallels identified by Green (1991), agreeing only with those between Ausonius' *Mosella* and Statius' *Silvae* 1.3 that I discuss below.

be seen particularly well in *Mosella* 283–348, where Ausonius describes the *uillae* along the river Moselle with close parallels to Statius' *Silvae* 1.3 and 2.2.¹⁵ For example: *alternas comunt praetoria ripas* ("stately homes adorn either bank," Auson. *Mos.* 286) and *alternas seruant praetoria ripas* ("stately homes guard either bank," Stat. *Silv.* 1.3.25); *blanda salutiferas permiscunt litora uoces, / et uoces et paene manus* ("the charming shores mix up voices of greetings and good wishes, voices and almost hands as well," Auson. *Mos.* 295–6) and *datur hic transmittere uisus / et uoces et paene manus* ("here it is possible for looks, voices and almost hands to go across," Stat. *Silv.* 1.3.30–1). However, close as these parallels are, they serve to emphasize very different values in the two poems.¹⁶ The focus of the praise in the *Mosella* is not man's technological superiority over nature as in Statius' poems, but rather the natural beauty and brilliance of the river and the landscape, on which the *uillae* are seen to intrude. Thus, the close verbal parallels here are employed in a contrasting reception mode, which emphasizes the differences between their settings, times, and the cultural values that they express.¹⁷

Even if Vergil had the greater influence on the language and style of "Augustan" poetry, these poets engaged in various ways with Statius' works, which they used as inspirations for scenes, poetic technique, and to express contrasts between his world view and theirs.

Statius in "Post-Augustan" Poetry of Late Antiquity

"Claudian's poetry, in its style and execution, could almost pass for work from the hand of Statius or a contemporary."¹⁸ An analysis of the metrical shape of his poetry helps to substantiate this claim. For example, the frequency of "repeat clusters" (six or more repetitions of the same dactyl-spondee line-pattern within sixteen lines) in Claudian's poetry (1: 73.35) places him between Statius' *Thebaid* (1: 101.1) and Valerius Flaccus (1: 44.7), close to Lucan (1: 82.7) and far from Vergil's *Aeneid* (1: 200.1).¹⁹

Like other "post-Augustan" poets of late antiquity, Claudian continued to use the reception objects adopted by his predecessors, such as line endings

15 These have been collected by Posani (1962) 59–60; Kenney (1984) 192–6; and Newlands (1988).

16 Newlands (1988) argues this point convincingly.

17 Vannucci (1989) argues a comparable case of close similarities, combined with significant differences in content, for the parallels between Ausonius' *Cupido Cruciatu*s and the Lemnian episode in Statius' *Thebaid* 5.

18 Dewar (1991) xxxviii.

19 Duckworth (1967) 92–94, 121; see also Cameron (1970) 287–92.

or scenes, but he also introduced new reception objects, such as characters or genre.²⁰ His *De Raptu Proserpinae* provides a good example. For this unfinished hexameter poem in three books, Statius' *Achilleid* has long been seen as a model. On the level of plot, for example, both poems tell the story of a mother (Thetis/Ceres) who has her child (Achilles/Proserpina) live on an island (Scyros/Sicily) for the sake of the child's safety. Both stories include a rape (of Deidameia/Proserpina), in which the fierce character of the rapist (Achilles/Pluto) is tamed by his experience of being in love for the first time. Striking verbal parallels in the descriptions of some characters have been identified,²¹ but it may be even more important to note how Claudian uses the genre of the *Achilleid* as a model for his poem. The *Achilleid* is part of a retrospectively created, alternative epic tradition, that of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which focuses on non-martial subject matter such as love, and draws attention to its deviations from standard heroic epic.²² The contrasting nature of love and arms is a central concern of both the *Achilleid* and *De Raptu Proserpinae*. Claudian, for instance, explores their opposition by juxtaposing the two elements in the rape of Proserpina, that is, the fulfillment of love for Pluto and the experience of violence for Proserpina and Ceres.²³ Furthermore, *De Raptu Proserpinae* ends abruptly with Ceres searching for her daughter. In this formality of being an unfinished epic, it also imitates the *Achilleid*.²⁴ The failure of the poets to finish their epics corresponds to the failure plots of the poems. In the *Achilleid*, Thetis fails to prevent her son from going to war,²⁵ and in *De Raptu Proserpinae*, the series of successful interventions intended to avert war ends in a scheme based on violence. Claudian's use of

20 Instances of reception objects not discussed in this chapter can be found in Aricò (1983) 36–8 (on Statian echoes in Claud. *Carm. Min.* 27); Wheeler (1995) 117–19 (on Stat. *Theb.* 8.1–83 and Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 1.32–116); Zeiner (2005) 2 (on echoes from the *Silvae* in Claudian); Parkes (2005b) (Honorius in Claud. *IV Cons. Hon.* is modeled on Statius' Parthenopaeus and Achilles); Pavan (2007) (echoes of Opheltus' funeral games in Claud. *IV Cons. Hon.*).

21 E.g., von Albrecht (1989) 389–90 (Deidameia and Proserpina; the effects of love on Achilles and Pluto); Taisne (2001) (Thetis and Ceres); Tsai (2007) 45–7 (Achilles' and Pluto's blushes); Parkes (2010). See also the list in Dilke (1965) 61, despite its random nature.

22 Hinds (1998) 136–44.

23 Wheeler (1995) 122–33. See also Parkes (2010).

24 Heslin (2005) 66–70; Parkes (2010).

25 See further Ganiban, pp. 76–86 in this volume.

the genre of Statius' *Achilleid* may suggest that alternative epic must fail in closure as it seems unable to get away from war and violence.²⁶

Statius and, in particular, his Thebes are very present in Dracontius' works.²⁷ He is the only poet whom Dracontius mentions by name, when he refers to Menoeceus' suicide:

Menoecea Creontis

Statius ostendit quia fuso sponte cruore,
ut pater orbatus furiarum regna teneret,
Thebanos proprio perfudit sanguine muros.

DRACONT. LAUD. DEI 3.261–4²⁸

Statius shows that Menoeceus, Creon's son, having willingly spilt his own blood, drenched the Theban walls with it so that his father, even as he lost him, could keep the kingdom of madness.

Dracontius then notes that Menoeceus' deed fits the previous crimes and disasters of his family rather well (3.269–73). In the context, Dracontius contrasts Greek and Roman heroes who thought that they gave their lives for a better cause (251–530) with heroes from the Old and New Testament who, in his view, rightly risked their lives, since they did so in faith and were therefore rewarded by eternal life (99–250). By summarizing Menoeceus' story and indicating his source, Dracontius varies both the reception object (the plot of the *Thebaid*) and the modes (explicit reference to Statius and plot summary).

It is noteworthy that Dracontius refers to Statius, an imperial Roman poet, as the authority for an event in heroic Greek history. This suggests that Statius' epic had integrated the history of Thebes into the shared historical knowledge and cultural understanding of the Latin-speaking elite in Vandal North Africa around 500 CE, and that the events at Thebes had in this way become a paradigm. Indeed, in *Romulea* 10 Dracontius uses the events at Thebes, as told

26 For a more direct use of a Statian genre by Claudian, see Claud. *Epith. Hon. et Mar.* and Stat. *Silv.* 1.2, with Pavlovskis (1965b) 166–8; Roberts (1989) 321–34; Miyagi (1994); and Horstmann (2004) 79–88, 113–38.

27 On Dracontius' use of Statius in general, cf. Rossberg (1880); Barwinski (1887) 12–18, 81–104; Moussy (1989).

28 Cf. Stat. *Theb.* 10.756–82, esp. 777 (*sanguine tunc spargit turrets et moenia lustrat*, “then Menoeceus spattered the towers with his blood and cleansed the city walls”) and 10.708 (*ne perge meos orbare penates*, [Creon to Menoeceus] “do not continue to rob my house”).

in Statius' *Thebaid*, as a negative example again, this time for the worship of the wrong gods.²⁹ The short epic locates the second part of Medea and Jason's story in Thebes (instead of Corinth) so that Medea's murders—she kills Jason and her two sons in addition to Creon and his daughter—provide a definite closure to the Theban dynasty. With the royal family extinguished and Medea departed, Thebes can finally rest, a hope expressed in the epilogue:

saeue Furor, crudele Nefas, infausta Libido,
Impietas, Furiae, Luctus, Mors, Funera, Liuor,
linquite mortales miseroque ignoscite mundo,
parcite iam Thebis, diros cohibete furores.

DRACONT. ROM. 10.570–4

Grim Fury, cruel Crime, ill-starred Lust,
Impiety, Furies, Mourning, Death, Ruin, Envy,
leave the mortals and forgive the wretched world,
spare now Thebes, hold back your evil madness.

After this prayer and a summary of the history of Thebes (10.574–86),³⁰ the epilogue ends with a warning not to worship gods who bring about such disaster (601–2). Here, Dracontius uses Statius' *Thebaid* for an anti-pagan statement, which may be compared to the proto-Christian understanding of Statius in the Middle Ages.

Within our survey of late Roman poetry, Statian echoes, mainly from the *Thebaid* and the *Silvae*, outnumber those of Vergil for the first time in Sidonius Apollinaris' poetry.³¹ In addition, Sidonius refers to Statius as the poet of the *Thebaid* and the *Silvae*, for instance, in *Carmen* 9, which introduces the following books of poems (*Carm.* 10–24) and consists largely of a catalogue of literary works that are not like Sidonius' book of poetry. Thus, Sidonius claims,

29 Cf. Schetter (1980) and Kaufmann (2006) 45, 59–62, 343–4, 452.

30 This starts with Cadmus and ends with the duel of the brothers. Cf. also the historical surveys in Stat. *Theb.* 1.4–14, 1.180–5, 11.487–92.

31 They are, however, not always very obvious, as they are often combined with expressions from either Vergil or Claudian, e.g., Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 2.332–40 (Tiber)—cf. Stat. *Theb.* 9.404–10 (Ismenos) and Claud. *Olyb. et Prob.* 209–17 (Tiber); Bitschofsky (1881) 24–5; Dewar (1991) 134–5—or Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 5.164–8 (Majoran's speed)—cf. Verg. *Aen.* 5.315–61 (Euryalus' victory) and Stat. *Theb.* 6.561–645, esp. 566, 613, 640, 644 (Pathenopaeus' victory); Anderson (1927). For another example of a use of Statius in Sidonius, not discussed in this chapter, see Pavan (2005) (chariot race in Stat. *Theb.* 6 and in Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23).

his poetry cannot be compared to either the *Thebaid* or the *Silvae* (9.226–9).³² By contrast, in the prose epilogue to *Carmen* 22, Sidonius refers to (some of) the *Silvae* as models for the length of his own *uilla* poem:

si quis autem carmen prolixius eatenus duxerit esse culpandum, quod epigrammatis excesserit paucitatem, istum liquido patet neque balneas Etrusci neque Herculem Surrentinum neque comas Flauii Earini neque Tibur Vopisci neque omnino quicquam de Papinii nostri siluulis lectitasse.

SID. APOLL. CARM. 22.6

But if someone thinks that the poem, being so long, has to be criticized for exceeding the brevity of epigrams, it is very clear that he has not read the “Baths of Etruscus,” the “Hercules at Surrentum,” the “Hair of Flavius Earinus,” the “Tiburtine Villa of Vopiscus,” or any other of the *Silvae* of our Papinius.

In this poem, Sidonius praises the villa of his friend Pontius Leontius, partly using motives and language that Statius had used in his *uilla* poems (*Silv.* 1.3, 2.2) and in *Silvae* 1.5,³³ for example, a catalogue of different marbles (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 22.137–41; cf. Stat. *Silv.* 1.5.34–9 and 2.2.85–94). At the same time, Sidonius evokes the *Thebaid* by fitting the praise of the villa into a mythological framework: on his return from India, Bacchus meets Apollo, who advises him against going to Thebes, the city of crime, and suggests instead that they should travel together to Gaul and there settle on a beautiful spot, on which many years later the *uilla* of the Pontii will be built. Apollo’s opening question recalls rather pointedly Tisiphone’s address to Pietas: *tum Phoebus: “quo pergis?” ait, “num forte nocentes, / Bacche, petis Thebas?”* (“then Phoebus said: ‘Where are you going? Are you, by any chance, going to blameworthy Thebes, Bacchus?’”, Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 22.86–7) and *“nunc sera nocentes / defendis Thebas?”* (“‘are you now, at this late point, defending blameworthy Thebes?’”, Stat. *Theb.* 11.486–7). Furthermore, both speeches include a short history of Thebes, listing Cadmus, Agave, Oedipus, and his marriage to Jocasta (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 22.89–99, Stat. *Theb.* 11.487–92). In *Carmen* 9 and 22, Sidonius makes use of both the *Thebaid* and the *Silvae* by way of explicit references to these works, in the former to deny similarities between them and his poetry, in the latter to re-establish the links. These paradoxical uses of Statius largely correspond to Sidonius’ ambivalent attitude to poetry as expressed in the negative catalogue of

32 On Statius in Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 9, see Santelia (1998) 240–1, 248.

33 Delhey (1993) 16–19, 27–9.

Carmen 9, on the one hand, and the subsequent collection of poetry, on the other.³⁴

Compared to the “Augustan” poets of late antiquity, the “post-Augustan” poets reveal more Statian influence on the formal (linguistic, stylistic, metrical) level. The influence of Claudian seems to have been crucial, for the later poets who show Statian influence are also much indebted to Claudian. In addition, the “post-Augustan” poets used more complex reception objects, such as genre and plot, Statius as an authority, and Thebes as a paradigm of familial and divine dysfunction, and also more varied reception modes, such as summaries and explicit references. Through their engagement in the reception of his works, Statius emerges as an influential authority for the poetry of late antiquity.

Statius in the Prose of Late Antiquity

References to Statius and uses of his poetry in the prose of late antiquity start, with very few (possible) exceptions, in the second half of the fourth century CE, the same period when the poets showed regular interest in Statius’ poetry. Most notably, it was probably at that time that the *Thebaid*, and thenceforth both the *Thebaid* and, to a lesser degree, the *Achilleid* were used regularly in grammatical treatises, commentaries on classical authors, and occasionally in other contexts.³⁵ By contrast, no scholia seem to have been written on the *Silvae*,³⁶ and there are very few references to them in other prose works. This may be connected to the well-known separation between Statius’ epics and the *Silvae* in their transmission and availability in the Middle Ages.

Lactantius Placidus’ Commentary on Statius’ Thebaid

The commentary on the *Thebaid*, attributed to Lactantius Placidus, is a very complex collection of explanations on Statius’ epic. After its composition as a book, it was broken up into interlinear and/or marginal scholia, and

34 Cf. Hernández Lobato (2010).

35 The commentary transmitted on manuscripts of the Statius’ *Achilleid* is most probably Carolingian or early medieval and therefore beyond the scope of this paper; see Sweeney (1969) 88–90, who argues that most of the few entries that are not directly copied or rewritten from Servius have been taken from the first Vatican Mythographer; see also Jakobi (1997) 305–9, who claims a reverse relationship with the first Vatican Mythographer and attributes the commentary to ninth- or tenth- century northern France.

36 Sweeney (1969) 1 n. 1 states that the *codex unicus*, discovered by Poggio in 1416/1417, “apparently contained no glosses or scholia, and so all annotated manuscripts of this contain notes of Renaissance origin alone.”

transmitted in manuscripts of the epic until perhaps the eighth century, often without *lemmata*.³⁷ At this point, the scholia were collected into a commentary again, and subsequently transmitted both as an independent book and in the form of interlinear and/or marginal scholia.³⁸ This accounts for two general features of the commentary: unreliable or even wrong *lemmata*, and misplaced explanations.³⁹

The complex transmission of the commentary has also encouraged scholars to identify different chronological layers and authors. For this purpose, the *clausulae* (i.e., the last few words of sentences) have been analyzed to attribute those following standard metrical form to one fourth-century author,⁴⁰ and to categorize others as later additions. Furthermore, comparisons with Servius' commentary on Vergil's works and with the remains of Donatus' important works have suggested that the oldest layer of Lactantius Placidus' commentary was written in the second half of the fourth century: that is, after Donatus' commentary on Vergil, which does not seem to have contained any quotations from Statius, and before that of Servius, who regularly quotes Statius' *Thebaid* and may even have used the original version of Lactantius' commentary.⁴¹ If the fourth-century date is correct, the quotations from Sedulius (Lact. *ad Theb.* 8.286) and from Boethius (*ad Theb.* 4.106) have to be excluded from Lactantius Placidus' commentary as interpolations.⁴²

Who was Lactantius Placidus? The author's name is attested in one of his notes:

sed de his rebus, prout ingenio meo committere potui, ex libris ineffabilis doctrinae Persei praeceptoris seorsum libellum composui Lactantius Placidus.

LACT. *AD THEB.* 6.363–4

37 That it was first produced and transmitted as a book can be deduced from the fact that there are no scholia between *Theb.* 12.513 and 615, which most probably resulted from a sheet missing from the commentary at the time it was broken up into scholia; cf. Klotz (1908) 501.

38 Cf. Klotz (1908) 501–3; Sweeney (1969) 75–6, 84–5.

39 Jakobi (1992) 365, who discusses misplaced explanations.

40 Klotz (1908) 505–8 (one author); Jakobi (2004) 4–6 (fourth century).

41 Van de Woestijne (1950). Despite explicitly agreeing with van de Woestijne, Jakobi (2004) uses van de Woestijne's key evidence (the one identical comment in Lact. *ad Theb.* 6.39 and Serv. *ad Aen.* 11.36) to argue for a later contributor, who took his material from Servius' commentary.

42 Van de Woestijne (1950) 150–2; Jakobi (2004) 1.

But about these things, I, Lactantius Placidus, have separately written a booklet based on the ineffably learned books of my instructor Perseus, according to my intellectual abilities.

This note has been read in the context of those entries that reveal the commentator's neo-Platonic interests and place him among the followers of Mithras (e.g., Lact. *ad Theb.* 1.719–20), and it has been suggested that Lactantius Placidus had close connections to the senatorial pagan revival movement at Rome at the very end of the fourth century,⁴³ though he may not have been identical with the author of the original commentary.⁴⁴

The original commentator has been praised for his learning, his knowledge of Greek literature and scholarship, and his ambition to guide the reader through the *Thebaid* step by step,⁴⁵ exemplified by his introductions to each book, as well as by his paraphrases of Statius' text, for example:

NEC TE FURIBUNDAE (CRIMINE MENTIS / ARGUERIM) id est non te arguo propter crimina mentis tuae. agnosco enim fratris esse, quaecumque tua prosecutione complecteris.

LACT. *AD THEB.* 2.423–4

BUT I WOULD NOT ACCUSE YOU OF A MAD MINDSET: This means that I do not accuse you of charges that could be brought against your mind. For I acknowledge that all which you have expressed in your accompanying speech is my brother's thinking.

For the most part, however, the commentary consists of factual explanations covering, for instance, geography, genealogy, or mythology; unlike, for example, Servius' commentary on Vergil's works, it contains very few linguistic, stylistic, or grammatical entries.⁴⁶ This may mean that the commentary was written for scholars or well-educated readers, rather than for use in schools. It is tempting to conclude from this that Statius' poetry was never taught at school in late

43 Jakobi (2004) 12–6; see also Klotz (1908) 512–15. Cameron (2011) argues against the existence of such a movement, but cf. now also Testa (2013).

44 Jakobi (2004) 11 separates him from the original commentator, whom he describes as “traditionally pagan.”

45 Klotz (1908) 515–20; Jakobi (1995); Jakobi (2004) 6.

46 E.g., Klotz (1908) 509–10 has counted only eight grammatical explanations for the whole of book 1.

antiquity,⁴⁷ which in turn may help to explain the low number of late antique prose writers who refer to his works.

Statius in Other Prose Works of Late Antiquity

In his commentaries on Vergil's works, Servius quotes the *Thebaid* around seventy times,⁴⁸ probably to the exclusion of the *Achilleid* and the *Silvae*.⁴⁹ It is perhaps possible that his interest in the *Thebaid* was prompted by Lactantius Placidus' commentary, but he uses the *Thebaid* in very different ways, mainly to substantiate his views on correct and incorrect language uses. Servius seems to have been the first to grant Statius the status of a regular authority on linguistic matters,⁵⁰ and while he sometimes disapproves of Statius' Latin (e.g., *ad Aen.* 2.272), he quotes his use of language approvingly in other places (e.g., *ad Aen.* 6.104). This means that, for Servius, Statius is as good an authority as a classical poet, if he happens to use the language in the manner that Servius thinks is correct.⁵¹

Following Servius' lead, other commentators on classical poetry (e.g., pseudo-Acro on Horace's *Odes*)⁵² and a number of grammarians (e.g., Pompeius, Priscian, and Eutyches) also quote from Statius in order to illustrate grammatical points,⁵³ while much later Isidore of Seville occasionally quotes from Statius when explaining the meaning of words (e.g., *Etym.* 14.8.37). Overall, the grammarians' use of and attitude towards Statius corresponds largely to that

47 Klotz and others (quoted by Thomson [1928] 24) have used the omission of a commentary on Statius from Jerome, *Adv. Rufin.* 1.16 as evidence that his poetry was not taught in schools, but it seems doubtful that Jerome intended to give a complete list (Thomson [1928] 24–5; van de Woestijne [1950] 150; *pace* Wessner [1929] 299–300 and Jakobi [2004] 3). Without providing any evidence to the contrary, Jakobi (2004) 3 claims that Statius is known to have been read in schools in Gaul around 380.

48 Sixty-three times according to Wessner (1929) 302, sixty-eight according to Valmaggi (1893) 486, eighty-four according to van de Woestijne (1950) 154.

49 When introducing quotes from Statius, Servius does not mention work titles. For the only possible reference to the *Silvae*, see Vollmer (1898) 33 n. 5. Possible quotations from the *Achilleid* are interpolated; see Klotz (1908) 524.

50 Wessner (1929) and Kaster (1978) against Thomson (1928).

51 Cf. Kaster (1978) 199–200 against Wessner (1929) 330–2.

52 Valmaggi (1893) 488–9.

53 The reference to the *Thebaid* in Probus' *Catholica* (*Gramm.* IV 24.8–11 Keil), a treatise which has been found to be identical with Sacerdos' *Ars* (second half of the third century), is puzzling as it is the only attestation of Statius by a grammarian before the late fourth century.

of Servius.⁵⁴ Priscian, who refers to Statius in more than seventy places, is the first grammarian to quote from the *Achilleid*, as well as, in one instance, from the *Silvae* (Prisc. *Inst.* 13.15 [*Gramm.* 3.10.21–4 Keil]), a unique citation among the prose authors of late antiquity.

Other than the grammarians, only a few late antique prose writers made use of Statius' works.⁵⁵ The most intriguing reference to Statius' *Achilleid* is perhaps recorded in the *Historia Augusta*, in which Gordian the Elder (I) (159–238 CE) is said to have written in his youth an *Antoniniad*, in thirty books, about the lives, wars, and other deeds of Antoninus Pius and Antoninus Marcus, following the models of Vergil's *Aeneid*, Statius' *Achilleid*, and the *Alexandriads* of unnamed authors (SHA *Gord.* 3.3). This seems a rather surprising choice of poetic models: neither the *Aeneid* nor the *Achilleid* were written by a young poet; neither comes even close to thirty books or narrates the lives and wars of two men, and the *Achilleid* certainly does not seem an appropriate model for a martial, imperial panegyric. Would Gordian maybe have used only the description of Achilles' youth and upbringing? The note, like many others in the *Historia Augusta*, opens up more questions than it answers, as though it counted either on an audience that completely missed the incongruities or on one that enjoyed them as a form of entertainment.⁵⁶

By contrast, a quotation from Statius in Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi* is explicitly addressed to a learned audience. Gallus, the narrator of the relevant passage, introduces the quotation by *ut dixit poeta nescio quis* ("as some poet says"), adding that *utimur enim uersu scholastico, quia inter scholasticos fabulamur* ("I'm using a learned verse as I speak among learned men," 3.10.4). Yet the quotation itself, the simile that compares Capaneus carrying Melanippus' body to Hercules hauling the Erymanthian boar (Stat. *Theb.* 8.749–50), strongly contrasts with the light-hearted tone of Sulpicius' miracle story, in which a huge salmon is captured. Earlier, Sulpicius describes Gallus as "learned" (1.27.5),

54 They sometimes quote Statius as a model, alongside classical poets (e.g., Eutych. *Gramm.* 5.483.28–484.1 Keil; Cledon, *Gramm.* 5.59.14–16 Keil), and sometimes criticize his use of language (e.g., Pomp. *Gramm.* 5.173.14–17, 188.13–16 Keil).

55 It has been argued that Tertullian follows Statius' *Achilleid* when he uses Achilles' transvestism as a negative example in his *De Pallio* 4.2 (Heslin [2005] 271–4, with reference to Gerlo [1940] 106–15). Not only would this be a uniquely early (c. 200 CE; cf. Hunink [2005] 13–15) reference to Statius, it is also questionable for other reasons, such as the vagueness of the parallels (cf. Hunink [2005] 185–94), and the facts that the story is turned in such a way as to best fit the logic of the argument without any consideration for its source or original context (cf. Hunink [2005] 193).

56 On the author and purpose of the *Historia Augusta* see, most recently, Cameron (2011) 743–82 and Paschoud (2013).

and Sulpicius himself had been a student of Ausonius. It is therefore likely that Sulpicius intends the contrast to stand out, for the educated among the (internal and external) audience to notice. If so, the quotation from Statius is here used to celebrate the learnedness of the Christian intellectuals among the followers of St. Martin in Gaul.

Finally, other authors use lines from the *Thebaid* as evidence for their claims about philosophical ideas, musical history, or physical phenomena: Claudianus Mamertus in his neo-Platonic discussion of the incorporeality of the soul (*De Statu Animae* 1.20 p. 70.20–71.2); Boethius in the context of flute music (*De Institutione Musica* 1.1); Isidore of Seville with reference to thunder (*De Natura Rerum* 30.1).

As may be expected, the reception objects and modes of the prose writers in late antiquity are much more limited than those of the poets. As their main mode, the prose writers quote literally, usually lines or part-lines from the *Thebaid*. In only one case is the *Achilleid* as a whole mentioned as a model epic. In most other cases, the reception objects consist of linguistic usage, with occasional uses of an epic simile, a philosophical point of view, and factual information. The almost complete neglect of the *Silvae* by the grammarians may be related to the poems' separate transmission later loss.

Conclusion

In both prose and poetry, the reception of Statius in late antiquity can be dated to the second half of the fourth and the first half of the fifth century CE. Most authors belonged either to the educated elite of Gaul (Ausonius, Paulinus of Nola, Sulpicius Severus, Sidonius Apollinaris, Claudianus Mamertus), or to the scholars and teachers at Rome (Lactantius Placidus, Servius), though some lived elsewhere in the Roman empire, most importantly Claudian at the imperial court. Many of these authors knew each other or each other's friends, both within one region (e.g., Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola, Sidonius Apollinaris and Claudianus Mamertus) and across the Roman empire, as letters, for example, between Symmachus and Ausonius or Paulinus of Nola and Sulpicius Severus show. It is therefore easy to imagine how Statius' influence traveled between these places, even if we lack concrete evidence for such movements. His poetry never became as pervasive as that of Vergil in late antiquity, perhaps because Statius' works were not read in schools, but for the poetry and poetics of some poets they proved much more crucial than the works of Vergil.

Medieval Statius: Belatedness and Authority

Robert R. Edwards

Statius' medieval reception centers on reading and rewriting the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*. The *Silvae* remain unknown until the early fifteenth century, though late-classical poets, predominantly Christians, rewrite the villa poems and *epithalamia*.¹ Statius' poetic corpus thus narrows to a completed *Statius maior* on Thebes and an unfinished *Statius minor* on the youth of Achilles and the Trojan war. Both epics circulate in the Middle Ages as texts framed by academic and pedagogical commentary, as narratives resituated in vernacular literary tradition and chivalric culture, and as works strategically reimagined within courtly culture. In all three contexts, Statius is recognized as an *auctor* according to the fourfold sense of the term derived by medieval grammarians: that is, someone who creates, augments, binds together, and bears responsibility for a piece of discourse.² Though misidentified as the rhetorician Statius Ursulus of Toulouse, he is regarded as an ancient historiographer, stylistic model, revisionary poet, and moralist. His poems not only offer sources for instruction and literary adaptation but also serve to exert pressure on established vernacular literary traditions and cultural forms and to define the place of the literary by renegotiating Statius' own balance of poetic belatedness and authority.

Longe Sequere

The *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* are transmitted to the Middle Ages in a stable textual tradition, though some later witnesses present the *Achilleid* as a complete work by dividing it into four or five books.³ The texts are supplemented by

1 The *genethliacon* commemorating Lucan's birthday (Stat. *Silv.* 2.7) survives anomalously in a Carolingian manuscript (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 29.32); Munk Olsen (1985–1989) 2.534. See Newlands (1988) and Kaufmann, pp. 481–96 in this volume on Ausonius' revision of *Silvae* 1.3 and 2.2. Dominik (2003) 93 argues for *Silvae* 2.7, 4.4, and 4.7 as a necessary context for Statius' autocommentary in the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*.

2 Minnis (1988) 10–12.

3 Reeve (1983) 394.

marginal and interlinear glosses, Lactantius Placidus' late-classical *scholia* and later medieval commentaries, prose and verse arguments, narrative compendia, and school introductions (*accessus ad auctores*).⁴ These paratextual materials, conflated and recombined throughout the medieval period, recontextualize Statius' poems while fashioning readers within interpretive traditions of linguistic detail and intertextual reference. Their influence reaches beyond elementary instruction. Working on his *Teseida*, Giovanni Boccaccio reports his difficulty with an unglossed manuscript of the *Thebaid* and says that he requires guidance and glosses.⁵ In the early fifteenth century, educated Parisian elites are the audience for Laurent de Premierfait's narrative compendia of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*.⁶ Statius' epics are excerpted for grammatical and poetic *florilegia*, the latter predominantly speeches by tragic heroes and abandoned women. They also provide a source for independent compositions and exercises foregrounding pathos, such as the *Planctus Oedipi* and *Deidamia Achilli*.⁷ The twelfth-century pseudo-Fulgentian *Super Thebaiden* may represent a hermeneutic counterpart to such literary compositions, imitating Fulgentius' interpretive ingenuity and his search for meaning beneath the *integumenta* of pagan myth and poetry.⁸

The poetic warrant for recontextualizing Statius lies in Statius' poems themselves. In the epilogue to the *Thebaid*, Statius describes his contemporary reception in terms that anticipate his medieval fortune:

iam te magnanimus dignatur noscere Caesar,
 Itala iam studio discit memoratque iuuentus.
 uiue, precor; nec tu diuinam Aeneida tempta,
 sed longe sequere et uestigia semper adora.

THEB. 12.814–17

Now great-souled Caesar deems it fit to know you; Italian pupils now eagerly learn and remember you. Live on, I pray, and do not test the god-like *Aeneid* but follow at a distance and always honor its traces.

4 Background in Hunt (1991); Reynolds (1996); de Angelis (1997); Battles (2004) 1–17; Munk Olsen (2004); typology of *scholia* and commentary in Anderson (2009) 1.xix–xxvii; *accessus* to Statius in Anderson (1997).

5 Anderson (1988) 3–4.

6 Jeudy and Riou (1974); Bozzolo and Jeudy (1979).

7 Russell (1979) and Greene (1982) outline the conventions and modes of literary imitation.

8 Stock (1971); Edwards (1976); Edwards (1990); Hays (2002).

As the reference to Domitian suggests, Statius' poems operate in the milieu of political power, whose social forms and moral legitimacy are recurrent concerns in medieval adaptations. Already taught and memorized in its own age, the *Thebaid* (and the *Achilleid* even more so) will serve as a major text within medieval school curricula. The most influential terms in the epilogue position the *Thebaid* with respect to Vergil's *Aeneid*, following behind and showing reverence for its footsteps. Statius postulates a relation by turns deferential, rivalrous, and domestic. The *Aeneid* stands as a poetic and political authority subordinating other works. The key image of belatedness—*longe sequere*—acknowledges this authority but conveys, too, an ambivalent mixture of veneration and emulation. The *Thebaid* both walks in the footsteps of Vergil's poem and tracks it down. The image also suggests the relations of guide to follower and even husband to wife, on the model of Aeneas and Creusa or, more starkly, Orpheus and Eurydice.⁹

Quintilian dismisses this strategy by suggesting that later poets will always trail behind authorities: *ceteri omnes longe sequentur* (*Inst.* 10.1.87). But medieval writers understood the possibilities of using belatedness as a means to appropriate authority. Twelfth-century ecclesiastical writers, for instance, quote Statius and model their rhetorical subordination on the example of Statius' deferral to Vergil (Thomas of Perseigne, *Cantica Canticorum Eruditissimi Commentarii* 6.14; Peter of Blois, *Epistolae* 243; Stephen of Tournai, *Epistolae* 5). Medieval poetics applies Statius' image to invention and imitation, the chief means by which later Latin and vernacular writers reimagine the classical *auctores*. Geoffrey of Vinsauf advises writers adapting materials treated in earlier works to speak where their source text is silent and to be silent where it speaks: *ne sequamur uestigia uerborum* ("let us not follow the tracks of the words").¹⁰ The *Achilleid*, positioning itself in relation to Homer, claims the same intertextual space that the *artes poeticae* recommend. Achilles' deeds (*acta*) are widely celebrated, says Statius, *sed plura uacant* ("but many topics remain open," *Achil.* 1.4). A medieval gloss on the passage makes the reference to invention and imitation explicit: *id est multa restant adhuc dicenda et describenda de quibus non tractauit Homerus . . . "uacant" uacua sunt quia non dixit omnia* ("that is to say, many things which Homer did not treat poetically still remain to be said or described . . . 'remain open': they are open because he did not say everything").¹¹

9 See Malamud (1995) 25; Nugent (1996) 70; Pagán (2000) 444–6; Dominik (2003) 98–9.

10 *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, in Faral (1924) 309. Horace's comparable advice in *Ars Poetica* 131–5 is directed to a literal-minded translator.

11 Clogon (1968) 23. Heslin (2005) 72 notes the echo of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The poetics of belatedness and authority figures prominently in Dante's central encounter with Statius in the *Purgatorio*, which cancels the injunction to follow at a distance.¹² Statius catches up with Dante and Vergil from behind (*dietro a noi venìa, Purg.* 21.10) and reports that he secured the fame that he had announced tenuously in the epilogue to his *Thebaid*. When Dante identifies Vergil to him, Statius reenacts Aeneas' failed effort to embrace Anchises (*Aen.* 6.700–2) by trying to embrace Vergil's feet, the source for the footprints that belated poets follow. Vergil, addressing him as *frate* ("brother," 21.131) corrects Statius, who then realizes that he is treating their shadows as if they were embodied things (*trattando l'ombra come cosa salda*, 21.136). As the episode develops, Dante reverses positions so that Statius advances with him into the Earthly Paradise while Vergil, symbolizing the limits of pagan knowledge and natural reason, falls behind and eventually disappears.

Vernacular Classicism

In the high Middle Ages, Statius' epics appear in two contexts already shaped by vernacular traditions and heroic culture. The *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* are part of a group of Middle Irish prose adaptations that include Vergil's *Aeneid*, Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, Dares Phrygius' *De Excidio Troiae*, other heroic and mythical tales, and episodes such as that of Harmonia's necklace (*Stat. Theb.* 2.269–305). These works draw on both a secular, professionally structured vernacular tradition and an established monastic Latin tradition.¹³ The Statius translations follow the general outlines of their sources, but amplify and resituate them, and thereby function more as imitations than translations.¹⁴ At the same time, they circulate within a corpus of vernacular classical texts. An independent version of the episode of Harmonia's necklace (*Riss in Mundtuirc*) is interpolated in *Togail na Tebe* ("Destruction of Thebes") to fill a gap in the copy text of the oldest witness.¹⁵ The episode of the Lemnian women from *Togail na Tebe* and the translation of the *Achilleid* are incorporated in the third recension of *Togail Troí* ("The Destruction of Troy").

Togail na Tebe draws on the conventions of commentary and on the *Thebaid* as twin Latin sources for its narrative. The opening offers a condensed summary

12 Wetherbee (2008) 159–202 argues that Dante's conception of Statius grows out of a direct reading of his poems.

13 Cox (1924); Ní Mhaonaigh (2006).

14 Ahl (1988) 173–9 prefers metamorphosis to translation in describing the Irish works.

15 Miles (2007) 77.

that serves as an *argumentum*. It goes on, like the academic *accessus*, to name Statius as the *auctor* and to identify him as an eminent Frankish poet whose *intentio auctoris* is to recount the origin of the Thebans from Cadmus onwards and to tell the Oedipus story. Rhetorically, the work reformulates Statius' artificial narrative order into natural order; in terms of vernacular tradition, the background story of Oedipus functions as a *remscél* ("foretale") that provides a narrative context and rationale for the main story. The effect is to extend Statius' focus on fraternal strife into a dynastic history driven by kinship struggles, which spill over from the Thebans to the Argives.¹⁶ *Togail na Tebe* also frames the narrative with devices from textual commentary. Marginal glosses moralize on the funeral games for Opheltes and the night attack on the Thebans.¹⁷ Rubrics brought into the text mark structural divisions with annotations such as *Finit do scel an mundtuirc* ("finit to the tale of the necklace," 827). Lactantius Placidus' commentary provides materials for amplifying and explaining Statius' narrative within the work itself—for example, Sciron's deadly tricks against travelers (*Togail* 253–62; Lact. *ad Theb.* 1.333), an augmented list of the heroic foes turned friends mentioned by Adrastus as he reconciles Polynices and Tydeus (*Togail* 441–3; Lact. *ad Theb.* 1.474–6), the identification of Thersander as Polynices' surviving son (*Togail* 4708; Lact. *ad Theb.* 12.348), and the substitution of Misericordia for Clementia as the name of the temple where the Argive widows gather in Athens to supplicate Theseus (*dee na trocairi .i. Misericordia*, "the goddess of mercy, to wit, Misericordia," *Togail* 4762–3; Lact. *ad Theb.* 12.481–2).¹⁸ Other forms of internal glossing appear in narrative amplifications. Thus Diana is identified directly in the Irish text as the figure who kills Dryas in order to avenge Parthenopaeus' death (*Togail* 3831–4), whereas Statius leaves the matter uncertain: *illum auctor teli causaeque latebant*¹⁹ ("the source for the spear and the reasons were concealed from him," *Theb.* 9.876). Urbius, the child carried by Hippolyta after Theseus' triumph over the Amazons, is projected forward in history to Turnus' battle with Aeneas, in which he sides with the Rutulians (*Togail* 4799–810).

Vernacular tradition provides a complementary source for rendering and interpreting Statius' poem. Episodes from the *Thebaid* correspond to the tale-types enumerated for the Irish sagas—especially destructions, raids, battles,

16 Ní Mhaonaigh (2006) 8; Miles (2007) 80.

17 Calder (1922) xvi–xvii.

18 Meyer (1962) 696–8.

19 Adopting the corrections of the transmitted text (*olim... patebant/patebunt*) by Hall (*illum*) and Grotius (*latebant*).

adventures, sieges, and plundering.²⁰ These function not just mimetically but hermeneutically, as frames that make translated narrative action intelligible.²¹ The same principle applies to the demotic equivalents of offices and social roles in the *Thebaid*.²² Irish *fisid* ("seer" or "prophet") renders Latin *uates*.²³ Kings are regularly identified as *aird-ri* ("high king").²⁴ In the background story, Jocasta is made a war goddess (*morriugu*, *Togail* 88), whose appearance usually signals forthcoming disaster. At the same time, translation shows what does not carry across. In Statius, Eteocles defends his refusal to relinquish kingship by a self-interested appeal to prudence and practicality: *non parcit populis regnum breue* ("a short reign does not spare the people," *Theb.* 2.446); Thebes is a city with citizens and subjects. In the Irish version, unstable lordship or rule (*flaith[i]*us, the abstract notion of supremacy, *Togail* 841), puts a line of descent at risk (*chineadaib*, "descendants" or "peoples," 842). Tydeus' monstrous vengeance against Melanippus transgresses the *fas odii* (*Theb.* 9.4), the sanctioned laws of hatred, while the same offense in *Togail na Tebe* is a crime against rational human law (*recht n-indligthech*, "law of unlawfulness" or "law of irrationality" but also "outburst of crime" or "frenzy of madness," 3343).

The Irish *Achilleid* exists in a prose and a verse version, both largely restricted to book 1 of Statius' poem. Their common focus is on the boyhood deeds of Achilles performed as Chiron, his *aite* ("foster father"), teaches him the arts of the lyre, medicine, and hunting. The prose version rehearses nine heroic deeds that presage Achilles' epic character, while the verse adaptation, which is largely an enumeration of the deeds, adds a tenth exploit. Statius (*Achil.* 2.145–52) is the source for only one deed. The first half of the prose version thus brings the narrative into line with the biographies of heroes prominent in Irish vernacular tradition.²⁵ It also provides a social rationale for Achilles' youthful violence, for he slays monsters and rivals as a protector of Chiron and Thessaly. As in Statius, however, his violence grows beyond control before his removal to Lycomedes' court at Scyros, where he is transformed to a feminine simulacrum of himself and is domesticated. The Irish adaptation follows the

20 Cox (1924) 268, 274; Meyer (1962) 688; Stanford (1970) 35–8. Poppe (1995) suggests that Irish translations could form a historical cycle.

21 Harris (1998) 162–70.

22 I am grateful to Professor Benjamin Hudson for his advice on passages from Middle Irish. Any inaccuracies are mine.

23 *Togail na Tebe* 1623 at *Theb.* 4.407, 3930 at 10.249, 4155 at 10.624; *fáid* ("prophet") and *fisid* combine (620, 1254) for *uates* (*Theb.* 2.95, 3.549) and at 1186 for *uatum mentes* (*Theb.* 3.450).

24 Meyer (1962) 695.

25 Ó hAodha (1979) 89.

narrative of the rest of book 1, but makes important omissions of detail and theme. Deidamia's rape is reduced to a mention that Achilles slept with her and made her pregnant. The intricate play of sexuality, which envelops Achilles, Chiron, and Thetis as well as Deidamia, is omitted. Deidamia's subtle understanding of Achilles' performance as a woman is lost, too. Her speech at the end of book 1, a passage excerpted and imitated in other medieval traditions, has no place in the adaptation. The interest lies, rather, in the romance of youthful exploits and adventures before the mechanism of tragedy begins to close in the Trojan war.

The adaptation of the *Thebaid* in the Old French *Roman de Thèbes* introduces a new narrative genre, the twelfth-century *roman d'antiquité* which retells the epics of Thebes, Troy, and Rome. Formally and thematically, these works stand between the feudal-chivalric *chanson de geste* and the later *roman courtois*. From the former, they retain the focus on singular heroes, battles, councils, and the furnishings of warfare; for the latter, they anticipate a new focus on fiction, women characters, love themes, and psychological nuance. The *Roman de Thèbes*, if it is one poem, survives in short and long versions, each with different possibilities of narrative invention and arrangement. It addresses an exclusive audience of *clerc ou chevalier* (14). Topical allusions connect it to the Angevin court of Henry II, while anachronisms displace the classical narrative into a medieval, Christian context and even a Crusader ethos. The poem inspired later reworkings, notably the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* and Hue de Rotelande's pseudo-antique romances *Ipomedon* and *Protheselaus*. Its importance in the mid-twelfth century lies both in reinventing the *Thebaid* and in using classical authority to interrogate the imaginative world portrayed by the poem's vernacular predecessors.

The poet of the *Roman de Thèbes* read the *Thebaid* carefully and supplemented it with materials from other sources, including glosses and mythography.²⁶ In the short version of the poem, he names Statius in episodes, greatly modified from the original, that describe the funeral games (*Roman de Thèbes* 2739) and forecast Capaneus' downfall (8905).²⁷ Like the Middle Irish translator, he delays the *geste* of the two brothers in order to interject the background story of Laius, Jocasta, and Oedipus. Within the narrative structure of Statius' poem, he adds episodes recounting the capture of the castle of Monflor, Hippomedon's raid to secure food for the Greeks, and the treason and trial of Daire le Roux. As the account of the siege advances, his focus moves from the defining fraternal strife of the brothers to the adventures of a succession of

26 Donovan (1975) 45–57.

27 Petit (2010) 229–46, 53–73.

figures, each of whom meets catastrophe—Atys, Tydeus, Hippomedon, and Parthenopaeus. The poet also elides or abbreviates elements of Statius' poem. The extreme examples of the night raid on the Theban camp, Tydeus' vengeful cannibalism, and Capaneus' blasphemy disappear. Hypsipyle's account of the Lemnian women, the description of the funeral games, and the deaths of Amphiaraus, Hippomedon, and Parthenopaeus are greatly abbreviated, while the role of the pagan gods is diminished.

If these changes reflect the taste and decorum of chivalric society, they also support a critical recontextualizing of the *Thebaid* in the second feudal age. Statius examines the will to power, which he names (*regendi* / *saeuus amor*, "fierce love of rule," *Theb.* 1.127–8; *nuda potestas*, "naked power," 150) and casts it in its most radical formulation—a contest to exercise dominion over a realm worth little (*pugna est de paupere regno*, "the quarrel is over a meager kingdom," 151). The poet of the *Roman de Thèbes* imagines a social sphere and political order in which power and governance operate through institutional structures, delineated hierarchies of private authority and violence, and the fine-grained calculations of privilege and duty. For him, Thebes is a prosperous, cosmopolitan city whose streets, quarters, and private spaces map the material ambitions and rivalries of households and families. His descriptions of material objects, particularly the *ekphraseis* of Amphiaraus' chariot and Adrastus' tent, celebrate a style of life and social performance. Characters navigate their way by language and intelligence as much as by martial prowess, though Tydeus and Capaneus remain archaically heroic. The poet supplies, too, an erotic motive canceled out or displaced onto power itself by Statius. Ismene frankly voices her desire for Atys: *Ou face bien ou ge foloi, / coucherai moi o lui, ce croi* ("whether I act well or foolishly, I will go to bed with him—this I believe," 4692–3). Galathea, the daughter of the king of Nubia, is Eteocles' *amie*, and he has an image of her legs painted on his shield as a jest (*par gaberie*, 6273). Later, Eteocles realizes his desire for Salamandre, the daughter of Daire le Roux, in an erotic solution to a political crisis.

In the *Roman de Thèbes*, Eteocles and Adrastus rule kingdoms sustained by kinship, landholding, and feudal obligations, including those of counsel and military service. Though the poem does not produce a juridical description of twelfth-century feudalism, it examines the indwelling contradictions and vulnerabilities.²⁸ The debates that recur throughout the poem signal the moral complexity that lies below the political arrangements.²⁹ Jocasta learns that Oedipus is Laius' murderer but takes him as Laius' replacement because a dead

28 Giordanengo (2002) 193–9.

29 Nolan (1992) 57–62.

man offers no protection ([c]il qui mort est ne peut garir, 430); her decision is endorsed by the great men, barons, vavasors, and prosperous fief holders who counsel the marriage and elect Oedipus king. Statius presents the scheme of alternating kingship between Eteocles and Polynices as a narrative given. The *Roman de Thèbes* provides an institutional mechanism for the brothers' competing claims to go first. It is a flawed resolution, disavowed before it comes into force, when Eteocles claims that he will go first at all events (575–6). Nonetheless, the brothers swear oaths ratified by religion and law (*sor leur ydres et sor leur lois*, 578) before an assembly of barons who have standing to adjudicate any discord that might follow from the agreement. In Statius, Eteocles' subjects recognize the implausibility and shame of the arrangement (*Theb.* 1.171–96), but the medieval barons are concerned with accommodating contingencies, even when faced with bad faith and perjury. Their interest lies in the problems of governance, not power as such. The *Thebaid* opens up scrutiny of the chivalric world in the *Roman de Thèbes*, even though later treatments, like the *Histoire ancienne*, attempt to stabilize the social and political order by treating antiquity and the medieval world as a continuity.³⁰

Two major interpolations illustrate the predicaments that the *Roman de Thèbes* explores. The siege of the castle of Monflor on the way to Thebes (2947–3712) reveals the paradox that implicitly structures all discussions of loyalty in the story. Meleager holds the castle in fief from Eteocles, who is his *seigneur* and cousin. When Polynices calls for him to surrender Monflor, he faces a competing demand from a kinsman and legitimate claimant, backed up by promises of advantage if he complies and threats if he does not. The ensuing debate among Meleager's barons sets out the abiding contradiction: honoring the agreement made by the brothers means disloyalty to Eteocles, while loyalty to Eteocles requires the barons to foreswear the agreement they have witnessed and ratified. The impasse here is resolved obliquely, as the Argives draw the defenders out by feigning retreat and then cut them off as they rush out eager for plunder, leaving the castle unguarded.

In the episode of Daire le Roux (*Roman de Thèbes* 7291–8162), the contradiction is pursued further. Daire can regain his captured son from the Argives only by handing over to Polynices the tower that he holds in fief from Eteocles and thereby committing treason against his lord. When he counsels Eteocles to honor the agreement with Polynices, he carefully baits him to trespass the bonds connecting lord and vassal. In their exchange, Eteocles rashly gives Daire leave to do him ill: *congié te doing de moi mal fere* ("I give

30 Spiegel (1993) 112. Lynde-Recchia (2000) 35–60 contends that thirteenth-century prose treatments make a specific claim to historical truth over epic treatments.

you permission to harm me," 7625). Daire reminds Eteocles of what he already knows—that they all remain bound by the pledge to Polynices (*savez en vostre corage / ne soumes pas hor de l'ostage*, "you know in your heart that we are not free from our pledge," 7679–80)—so that Eteocles strikes Daire and ends any duty to maintain allegiance (*foi*) by committing an offense against Daire's person.

Daire's handover of the tower miscarries, and his subsequent trial before Eteocles' court reveals other tensions in the poem's social arrangements. Creon says that Daire has not sought proper redress. Othon defends him on the grounds of solidarity: *il est de nostre norreture / et par linage et par nature* ("he is of our upbringing both by lineage and by nature," 7829–30). The barons cannot specify a charge: has Daire committed treason or justly defended himself? Jocasta's advice—to value measure more than judgment or righteousness—finally moves the conflict to a different ground. Salamandre, Daire's daughter, has shown no interest in Eteocles' affection; but Antigone, echoing Daire's political remark to Eteocles, says that Eteocles now has the upper hand and that the lovers can thus show each other mercy. This agreement solves the immediate stalemate but contrasts with Eteocles' unbending refusal to accommodate Polynices. Creon notes that Eteocles has pardoned Daire to benefit Salamandre and himself but not his barons. This moral and political rigor opposes the ethos of *cortoisie* articulated by Othon at the end of the episode: *Si vet d'amie, / d'amors et de chevalerie* ("it has to do with a lover, love, and chivalry," 8111–12). The episode of Daire le Roux does not solve the competing demands of desire and loyalty; rather, it discloses the mechanics of accommodation and indirection.³¹ Here and elsewhere in the *Roman de Thèbes*, the poet adapts from Statius the singular predicament of uncompromising conflict in order to examine the pragmatics of negotiating loyalties and privatized duty within feudal culture.

Istoria Nascosa

Boccaccio writes the *Thebaid* into late-medieval vernacular culture in a way markedly different from the recontextualizations of earlier vernacular writers. He fills the gap identified by Dante, who says that Italian poets have written about love and rectitude but none has yet taken up the subject of arms: *arma uero nullum latium adhuc inuenio poetasse* ("I find indeed that none of the

31 The *Histoire ancienne*, chapter 115 intentionally omits the episode of Daire le Roux because it is too long and lacks true authority and historical certainty.

Italians thus far has written poems on the topic of arms," *De Vulgari Eloquentia* 2.2.9). His *Teseida*, moreover, annexes Dante's other topics within a vernacular *metrum heroicum*, an epic-romance informed by moral reflection on the balance of violence, desire, and order. The poem begins with Theseus' campaign against the Amazons, and carries the background story forward to the expedition against Creon. Its two protagonists, Arcita and Palemone, are the only descendants of Cadmus to survive the fall of Thebes. As in the *Roman de Thèbes*, the *Teseida* invests the will to power with an erotic object and the social forms of domestic and political governance, here courtly rather than feudal and baronial. Boccaccio displaces the *saeuus amor* (Stat. *Theb.* 1.127) of Eteocles and Polynices with the rivalry of Arcita and Palemone over Emilia, Hippolyta's sister. His poem examines the threats to a centralized court posed by two unruly kingdoms—Amazons who have found unconstrained liberty and Thebans driven by excess.

Boccaccio reproduces the apparatus of a classical poem as read in a manuscript culture.³² The prefatory letter to Fiammetta functions, in part, as an *accessus* that explains the author's intent in composing the work and describes the action and structural arrangement of the poem; the *titulus operis* is deferred to the close of the poem, where the Muses disclose its full name, *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* ("the *Theseid* of the wedding of Emilia," "Riposta delle Muse" 12), which makes explicit the combination of arms and love. The first sonnet offers an *argomento generale*, rehearsing the major topic treated in each book. A sonnet presenting an *argomento particolare* prefaces each of the twelve books. Within each book, rubrics identify the subject matter of discrete narrative units. Boccaccio adds his own glosses (*chiose*) to clarify his conception of the narrative, gloss terms, explain allusions, and provide mythographic and cultural background. Like the extended descriptions of ceremony and social practice in the narrative, Boccaccio's notes attempt to evoke a sense of classical pagan culture.³³ The work framed by this interpretive machinery not only contains an erotic narrative but also itself serves as an erotic object. Boccaccio's prefatory letter recalls Fiammetta's interest in various stories, above all love stories (*una e altra istoria, e massimamente l'amorose*, "one story and another and especially love stories"); it offers her a very old story, unknown to most people (*una antichissima istoria e alle più delle genti non manifesta*), which is

32 Boccaccio's twelfth-century manuscript of the *Thebaid* (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 38.6) contains Lactantius Placidus' commentary in marginal and inter-linear glosses; Anderson (1988) 138–45.

33 Minnis (1982); McGregor (1991).

his reworking of Statius. The aim of his story, as Boccaccio says, is to create an object that Fiammetta should want to possess and so restore him to her favor.

Boccaccio's introduction of love as a focus and governing condition of the Theban story is complemented by his effort to privilege the forms of social life. In the *Thebaid*, fury and tyranny claim the social sphere as one of many casualties. In the *Teseida*, Arcita and Palemone fall in love with Emilia as she is first seen in the formal space of the garden and then returns to participate in a stylized performance of display and surveillance. The two Theban lovers comfort each other as victims of the same desire. When Arcita returns disguised as Penteo, he enters Teseo's entourage and the ceremonial world of the court. Palemone splits from him only after he hears of Arcita's return and disguise. Boccaccio phrases this change as a repetition of Oedipus' curse on Eteocles and Polynices. His gloss rehearses the background of the Oedipus story and explains the comparison: *e come ella [Tisifone] entrata nel petto de' due fratelli vi mise briga, così entrata nel petto di Palemone vi generò la discordia che seguita, che fu tra lui e Arcita* ("and just as Tisiphone brought conflict when she entered the hearts of the two brothers, so she created the discord that followed, which was between him and Arcita when she entered Palemone's heart," 5.13.2 *chiosa*). Even in their subsequent confrontation and private battle, however, their conflict is punctuated by conversation and gestures of affection and courtesy. Later, as champions stream into Athens, headed by Lycurgus and including Greek heroes of the Trojan war (Agamemnon, Menelaus, Nestor, Ulysses, and Diomedes), Arcita and Palemone renew friendship in a pageant of lavish feasting and entertainment.³⁴ Teseo's speech to the gathered champions transforms their imminent battle into game (*come un giuoco a Marte*, "like a game in honor of Mars," 7.13.1), seeking to avoid the internecine war of Theban history (*come al seme di Cadmo piacque fare*, "as the seed of Cadmus is pleased to do," 7.9.4). Arcita's death speech, seeking a place in Elysium, argues step by step that he does not fit in Theban history (10.95–9).

In adapting Statius' *Thebaid* to courtly culture, Boccaccio shows both the efficacy and limits of social practice, hence the boundaries of what can be recontextualized by poetic imitation. Arcita and Palemone are constrained by desire and driven to violence while they try to act within social decorum. Teseo is an example of moral action in the poem because of his capacity for self-correction. He contains his instinctive response and chooses not to be offended by Arcita and Palemone when they first appear to him, and he elects to pardon them when he discovers their private combat. Later, Venus and Mars negotiate their conflicting promises to aid Palemone and Arcita. Accommodations do

34 Battles (2004) 62 proposes that Boccaccio creates a fusion of Theban and Trojan narratives.

not, of course, constrain the larger forces that bear on Teseo's kingdom. When Arcita's spirit looks back at the world and specifically at Athens as a site of lamentation (11.2.6 *chiosa*), he laughs, and the rituals subsequently performed for him seem distant and detached. The commemorative temple built for him by Palemone is decorated with scenes (11.70–88) that rehearse the full action of the poem, except for Arcita's fall from his horse; yet the final image, Arcita's funeral urn, bears a warning as his epitaph: *per Emilia usando il mio valore / mori: dunque ti guarda da amore*, "performing my valor for [or: through] Emilia, I died; therefore, beware of love," 11.91.7–8). Teseo succeeds in resolving Amazon and Theban history in the sexual bounty of Emilia and Palemone's wedding night, yet these arrangements let the private and domestic move, if only provisionally, to the foreground of epic.

At the end of the *Teseida*, Boccaccio projects Statius' epilogue (*Theb.* 12.810–19) into a new literary dimension. Speaking as an author to his book, he remarks its singularity and its belatedness. Lesser (*infimo*, glossed as *basso*, "lower," 12.85.4 *chiosa*) because vernacular, his poem still has some claim to an honorable reception *tra gli altri* (glossed as *libri*, "books," 12.85.5 *chiosa*); and it holds a place in a literary succession, honoring its predecessors as elders (*come maggior*, 12.85.7) while furnishing material to its successors (*materia dando a cui dietro hai lasciato*, 12.85.8). Chaucer, who worked from a copy of Boccaccio's poem, accepts this revised formulation of belatedness. He recognizes Boccaccio's narrative strategy of imitating Statius by analogy but reintroduces Statius' themes into the courtly world.³⁵ Chaucer knows Statius as the poet "That bar of Thebes up the fame" (*House of Fame* 1461), and he substitutes Statius for Horace in the reconstituted *bella scuola* of epic poets whose ground he sends his *Troilus and Criseyde* to venerate (*Troilus and Criseyde* 5.1791–2). When Pandarus first visits Criseyde, he finds her with other women reading about the siege of Thebes (2.78–112). Pandarus' allusion to twelve books suggests that he knows the *Thebaid*, while Criseyde's mention of Oedipus and Laius indicates that the women are reading the *Roman de Thèbes* or a prose redaction like the *Histoire ancienne*. Later Cassandra recounts the Theban story (5.1457–1512), adapting the general argument of the *Thebaid* from a frequent manuscript gloss.³⁶ In the list of works reported in the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer tropes Boccaccio's prefatory letter in the *Teseida* by mentioning an *istoria nascosa*: "al the love of Palamon and Arcite / Of Thebes, though the storye ys knowen lyte" (F *Prologue* 420–1, G *Prologue* 408–9). Whether or

35 Anderson (1988) 50; see Edwards (2002) for reinscribing Statius into Boccaccio.

36 Magoun (1955) 409–20.

not this passage refers to a lost work, *Anelida and Arcite* and “The Knight’s Tale” survive as witnesses to Chaucer’s poetic splicing of Statius and Boccaccio.

Anelida and Arcite purports to follow Statius and Corinna (who was Theban) as the authors of an old story nearly devoured by time and presumably saved by vernacular translation from its Latin source (21). The same passage celebrating Theseus’ triumph (Stat. *Theb.* 12.519–21) that prefaces “The Knight’s Tale” is used as an epigram for this story, but the poem inserts itself into a different part of the Theban narrative from Boccaccio. Chaucer’s invention reworks Creon’s tyranny, which depopulates the region of nobles, forces them into alliance, and confines them within the city. There the love story and betrayal of Arcite and Queen Anelida displaces Theban dynastic and political conflict onto desire: “he was double in love and no thing pleyn” (87). In the companion sequence of complaints by Mars and Venus, originally one poem, the “broche of Thebes” (“The Complaint of Mars” 245), Harmonia’s necklace, is the symbol that glosses desire itself as doubleness—the overpowering demand and impossibility of possession.³⁷

In “The Knight’s Tale,” Chaucer both restructures the *Teseida* and recasts it along the tragic lines of Statius’ poem.³⁸ Emelye is a figure for Statius’ *nuda potestas*, an abstraction toward which will and desire are directed, for she has no idea of Arcite and Palamon’s love before they are discovered battling. The two lovers become antagonists as soon as they discover the same object of desire, and the courtesies of friendship introduce pathos but do not hold a remedy for their rivalry. Arcite proposes that love nullifies “positif lawe and swich decree” (1.1167), and concludes, “therfore, at the kynges court, my brother, / Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother” (1.1181–2). Among the gods, the conflicting promises to Palamon and Arcite, which Venus and Mars negotiate between themselves in the *Teseida*, require the intervention of Saturn, who fully embodies the fury and violence of Statius’ divine and heroic characters: “Myn is the ruyn of the hye halles” (1.2463). Theseus’ final disposition of Palamon and Emelye does not, as in Boccaccio, leave their marriage suspended indefinitely in a luxurious court or sexual bounty; it serves to finish the political work of subordinating Amazons and Thebans to the beneficent governance of rational Athenian order.

John Lydgate is arguably the favored medieval heir of Statian belatedness and authority. Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes* cites Statius as an authority for Tydeus’ exile (1272), but the poem’s sources lie in prose redactions of the *Roman de Thèbes*, supplemented by works such as Boccaccio’s *Genealogie Deorum*

37 Patterson (1991) 62–3.

38 Edwards (2002) 17–43.

Gentilium. Lydgate's *auctor*, in a full sense of the term, is Chaucer. The *Siege of Thebes* presents itself as an apocryphal Canterbury Tale, the first one told on an imagined return journey by the pilgrims to Southwark. Following vernacular treatments, Lydgate recounts the background story to "The Knight's Tale," beginning with Oedipus. He refocuses the narrative to make Tydeus a courtly hero and to end the story with Adrastus' death, and he offers extensive moralization, especially on princely conduct. His critique of chivalry recalls the social leveling of the parched Argive army in *Thebaid* 4: "For in the werre is non excepcioun / Of hegh estat nor lowh condicioun" (*Siege of Thebes* 4645–6). Lydgate positions himself deferentially behind Chaucer in the Theban narrative and with him as a pilgrim-narrator. By being a disciple and follower, he asserts his claim to be a successor; by fashioning Chaucer as a poetic father, he becomes a son and heir.³⁹

Statius' medieval reception is a literary and cultural history of recontextualization. Medieval writers recognize Statius' poetic belatedness to Vergil and Homer and exploit it to position their works in relation to his poems. The *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* furnish episodes, themes, and the cachet of classical authority. Reinventing and imitating their materials goes beyond the absorption of influences, however. Statius' poems are translated into established vernacular traditions with defining conventions. While they enrich the imaginative scope of medieval vernaculars, they also offer a structure to examine and interrogate the underlying cultural formations of these traditions. In this broader sense, they both confer and signify authority.

39 Spearing (1985) 88–110.

Statius in Dante's *Commedia*

Peter Heslin

As shown by Edwards in this volume,¹ Dante regards Statius as one of the great poets of Latin epic; his works are full of references which make it clear that he had an extensive and intimate knowledge of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*.² What makes Dante's *Commedia* such a unique and important moment in the reception of Statius is not this, however; it is that the Latin poet appears as a significant speaking character in his own right. What is more, Dante conceives of his Statius as a Christian,³ an intervention which has greatly perplexed readers from his day to ours. The puzzlement of Dante's near-contemporaries suggests that Statius' Christianity was news to them, too.⁴ To understand how Dante could have conceived of such a bold fiction, we must remember that the *Silvae* had not yet been discovered, so all of the biographical details we learn from that text were unknown. Dante drew his idiosyncratic portrait upon a nearly blank canvas.

There have been three main approaches to explaining the mystery of Statius' Christianity. The first has been to identify a particular moment in the *Thebaid* where the rhetoric might have belied for Dante a Christian theology. An early candidate was Capaneus' pronouncement that the pagan gods are mere projections from human fear: "it was fear that first brought gods into the world" (*primus in orbe deos fecit timor*, *Theb.* 3.661).⁵ This strategy was also adopted by Politian, who looked to Tiresias' mantic reference to an unknowable and unnameable god, the pinnacle of the three-fold universe (*triplicis mundi summum*, 4.516).⁶ Apart from the fleeting nature of these statements, the main problem with this approach is obvious: Capaneus is hardly the most

1 Edwards, pp. 497–511.

2 Moore (1896) 243–55.

3 There is a vast bibliography on this aspect of the *Commedia*, and it would be beside the point of this Statius-focused study to attempt to survey it systematically. For starting points, see Paratore (1976) 425 and Heil (2002) 73–9.

4 See the mid-fourteenth century commentary of Benvenuto da Imola, in Lacaita (1887).

5 Cf. Benvenuto da Imola, in Lacaita (1887).

6 Mariotti (1975). Politian evidently was looking for a passage just before the Argives arrive at the Langia; see below.

noble mouthpiece to convey the author's theological sentiments, and Dante puts Tiresias in Hell with the false prophets (*Inf.* 20.40–5).⁷ Hence a second strategy: to look for an external source, either a biographical tradition or an allegorical reading of passages or characters in the *Thebaid* that Dante might have drawn upon. The search for a convincing biographical source has been a failure.⁸ There were medieval allegorical readings of the *Thebaid*, but their relevance has been greatly overstated.⁹ Much has been made of the allegorizing commentary falsely attributed to Fulgentius, but it is certainly late in date and there is no evidence that it circulated at all; claims that Dante must have known it are unfounded.¹⁰ There were also obscure late-medieval allegorical traditions linking Theseus' killing of the Minotaur to Christ, but these are of scant relevance to the plot of the *Thebaid* and are attested later than Dante.¹¹ These allegories can serve as parallels for our own re-reading of the epic, but they are not very useful tools for explaining how Dante arrived at his ideas.

The third main approach to the problem has been to assert that the invention of a figure like the Christian Statius was simply a matter of poetic necessity for Dante.¹² It is true that Dante makes good use of the Christian Statius, but he could have achieved his ends in other ways. This mode of analysis tends to reduce Statius to a stick-figure rather than treat him as a real poet in whose works Dante was immersed, and does little to explain why Statius was selected as the writer to be granted the honor of Paradise. What tends to get short shrift in all three of these approaches is Dante's sense of the epic output of Statius as a whole, and its place in the Latin epic tradition beyond the gesture of respect to the *Aeneid* at the end of the *Thebaid*.¹³ We will begin from the assumption that Statius' Christianity was not invented as a superficial gimmick, but was intended as an important statement about the way to read Statius. Our discussion, therefore, will return to a mode of analysis which tries to situate an answer within Dante's own Statian hermeneutics.¹⁴ Instead of arguing for the importance of a single feature of the *Thebaid* in isolation, we will attempt to combine the best elements of earlier explanations into a single organic

7 Mariotti (1975) 156–7.

8 Anderson (2009) 3.65–73.

9 Caviglia (1974); Baumbble (1975); Padoan (1977); Petrocchi (1983) 105; Kleinhenz (1988b) 32.

10 Hays (2002); Anderson (2009) 1.xxvi. As we will see below, Dante had a very positive view of Hypsipyle, whereas this document allegorizes Hypsipyle negatively as bearing the insufficient waters of secular knowledge; for the text, see Sweeney (1997) 702.

11 Ronconi (1965) 566; Padoan (1977) 140–50.

12 Brugnoli (1969) 124–5; Barolini (1984) 258; and *contra* Wetherbee (2008) 13–14.

13 Martinez (1995).

14 Scherillo (1902) 499, immediately contested by Albini (1902).

reading.¹⁵ I will also make a new suggestion for the external factor that may have planted the seed of Dante's interpretation of Statius. By challenging us to re-interpret the *Thebaid* as if it were written by a crypto-Christian author, Dante highlights the sheer novelty of Statius' treatment of the gods as well as constructing a Christian teleology for the epic tradition.

Over-interpreting Latin Poetry

In addition to his mysterious Christianity, there are a number of other puzzles surrounding Dante's Statius which can give us an indication of Dante's methods. To start with, there is the question of Statius' excessive prodigality with money, the sin which Statius has just finished expiating when we meet him in Purgatory. This flaw was not made up out of the blue, but was the result of willfully over-interpreting a passing reference to Statius in Juvenal:¹⁶

curritur ad uocem iucundam et carmen amicae
Thebaidos, laetam cum fecit Statius urbem
promisitque diem: tanta dulcedine captos
adficit ille animos tantaque libidine uolgi
auditur. sed cum fregit subsellia uersu
esurit, intactam Paridi nisi uendit Agauen.

JUV. 7.82–7

When Statius has made the city happy by setting a date, everyone rushes to hear his attractive voice and the song of his darling *Thebaid*. He snares them with his great sweetness and holds them enthralled, and the crowd listens with a passionate desire. But when he brings the house down with his verse, Statius starves, unless he sells his virgin *Agave* to Paris.

Juvenal attests to Statius' success and popularity as a poet, and then observes that he starved nevertheless, and was reduced to prostituting his talent by writing pantomime. Juvenal was simply saying that lack of patronage has a degrading effect on poetry. Dante, in attempting to wring accurate biography from the stone of satire, permitted himself to infer that Statius starved because he wasted the proceeds of his financial success. To make sure that we know this, he twice indicates his source for the detail. When Statius introduces

15 Cf. Wetherbee (2008) 22.

16 Lewis (1956) 133; Brugnoli (1969) 123.

himself to Vergil, he says that he moved from Toulouse to Rome on account of the success brought by the great sweetness of his voice (*tanto fu dolce mio vocale spirto*, *Purg.* 21.88),¹⁷ which clearly alludes to the “great sweetness” (*tanta dulcedo*, *Juv.* 7.84) and “attractive voice” (*uox iucunda*, 82) to which Juvenal attributed his popularity.¹⁸ Secondly, Vergil says that in Limbo Juvenal had already mentioned Statius to him (*Purg.* 22.14–15), thus providing an explicit footnote for the reader: for information about Statius’ life, cf. Juvenal. Dante was willing to invent details of Statius’ biography, but he did so on the basis of his close reading of Latin poetry, even in cases where he must have known that he was indulging in over-interpretation.

There are three other parables of (mis)interpreting Latin poetry in the encounter between Statius and Vergil. The most important is the passage in which Dante’s Statius explains how he came to be converted. It was reading Vergil’s fourth *Eclogue* that was responsible for his salvation, for it made him receptive to Christian teaching when he encountered it in person (*Purg.* 22.64–81). Thus in Vergil’s work, as in Statius’, a pagan exterior can conceal a Christian message.¹⁹ This apparently straightforward act of allegorical interpretation is complicated by the other Vergilian passage to which Statius equally owes his salvation. He attributes his realization of the sinfulness of his prodigality and his subsequent repentance to another Vergilian line: the exclamation of Polydorus against man’s greed, his “accursed hunger for gold” (*auri sacra fames*, *Aen.* 3.56–7; cf. *o sacra fame de l’oro*, *Purg.* 22.40–1). It is very strange that Statius took an exclamation against the dangers of avarice to be a caution against its opposite, and one possibility is that Dante’s Statius has misunderstood Vergil’s *sacra* as “divine” rather than “accursed.” There are other possibilities, but they all involve very strange mistranslations or misinterpretations of Vergil.²⁰ However we resolve these problems it is clear that Statius’ freakishly bizarre misreading of Polydorus’ words is impossible to justify on an intellectual basis, as Dante surely knew. What justifies it is the crucial result that it produced in the internal reader, Dante’s Statius, who was thereby saved

17 The text of Dante is from Petrocchi (1966–1967).

18 Moore (1896) 256–7; Ronconi (1965) 568–9. Dante probably found this passage quoted in his Statian *accessus*; Heil (2002) 83–92. This is also where he likely found the mistaken information that Statius was from Toulouse.

19 This view is endorsed by an even higher authority when Matelda praises the story of the age of gold as found in the ancient poets as an adumbration of the earthly paradise (*Purg.* 28.139–47).

20 Shoaf (1978) 195–6; Barolini (1984) 259–60 n. 72; Kleinhenz (1988b) 25–7.

from an eternity in Hell. The point is that the reading of pagan Latin poetry must answer to higher purposes for Dante than literal accuracy.²¹

The final parable of misreading Latin epic is provided by another serious interpretive *crux* in this canto. When Vergil enumerates for Statius the many of his mythical heroines who are in Limbo with him, he includes "the daughter of Tiresias" (*Purg.* 22.113). We know of no daughter other than Manto, whom we have already met: not in Limbo, but among the damned in Hell. This could not have been a mere *lapsus* on Dante's part, for he made Manto the subject of a long and elaborate digression on her role in founding Vergil's home town of Mantua. Dante's Vergil concludes with a stern warning not to believe any other accounts (*Inf.* 20.97–9). The irony is that the false prophet he warns us against is clearly the text of the real Vergil, who had told a version of the founding of Mantua that flatly contradicts this one (*Aen.* 10.198–200).²² Whom do we believe, the real Vergil or the fictional one who calls him a liar? Subsequently, Dante's Vergil lies to Statius by putting Manto in Limbo rather than with the false prophets, perhaps out of consideration for Statius' feelings about his own character. In other words, first Dante has his fictional Vergil undercut the truthfulness of the *Aeneid* and then he undercuts the reliability of his own Vergil by showing him telling Statius an obvious untruth. The moral of all these parables is surprising but clear: the yardstick for interpreting pagan poetry is not what the author meant at the time (Vergil did not know he was predicting the birth of Christ), or its sense as Latin (*auri sacra fames* does not really mean what Statius takes it to mean), or even what its author later tells you (in regard to Manto, the text of the *Aeneid* is contradicted by Dante's Vergil, whose words to Statius are contradicted in turn by Dante). The only thing that matters for reading pagan poetry is the spiritual intent of the reader in applying the light of Christian revelation, which can make the worst misreading luminous and true.²³

Dante's Statius authorizes such a strategy of a radical Christianizing reinterpretation for his own epic. This is set up by Vergil's initial and pedestrian misreading, for he notes the pagan subject matter of the *Thebaid* and infers naively that Statius must still have been a pagan when writing it (*Purg.* 22.55–60).²⁴ Vergil has had no means of direct access to Statius' epic, but he has presum-

21 Franke (1994) 11–14. See also Dante's Vergil's effort to salvage his authority by re-interpreting the passage in the *Aeneid* where the Sibyl apparently denies the efficacy of prayer for the dead (*Purg.* 6.28–48).

22 Barchiesi (1973) 106; Barolini (1984) 214–17; Kleinhenz (1988b) 41 n. 30; Hollander (1991).

23 *Contra* Brownlee (1993) 106.

24 Grlic (1994) 81.

ably heard from Juvenal in Limbo about its subject and about the admiring reference to the *Aeneid* in its *envoi*.²⁵ On the basis of that superficial knowledge, he makes a mistaken inference about Statius' inner religious life; the lesson we are invited to draw from that error is to refrain from making inferences about the deeper meaning of the *Thebaid* from its pagan appearance. In reply, Statius sets up a distinction between false interpretations based on pagan appearances and true ones based on deep Christian meanings (22.28–30). The correct inference is that the *Thebaid*, like its author, conceals a deep Christian truth under a pagan carapace. Dante strongly endorses a hermeneutics of secular Latin poetry in which surface appearances are not to be trusted, but in which deep wisdom may become apparent in the light of Christian revelation. But where should we begin in our search for a key to this kind of interpretation?

Beginning in the Middle

Some readers have wrongly thought that Dante gives us an indication of a particular passage of the *Thebaid* that is crucial for indicating Statius' Christianity:

E pria ch'io conducessi i Greci a' fiumi
di Tebe poetando, ebb' io battesimo;
ma per paura chiuso cristian fu'mi,
lungamente mostrando paganesmo . . .

PURG. 22.88–91

And before I had led the Greeks to the rivers of Thebes in my poetry, I was baptized; but I was a hidden Christian out of fear, making a show of paganism for a long time . . .

These lines have inspired many a wild-geese chase: the first problem is to decide which river Dante means. Some have assumed the Langia, others the Asopus, but Dante is using the trope whereby a poet does that which he describes, which need not signify anything more specific than the writing of the poem in general terms.²⁶ In any case, Statius' account of his conversion

25 Pace Wetherbee (2008) 163. Vergil's reference to Clio (*Purg.* 22.58) may imply that he has heard the poem of the *Thebaid* as far as line 41, but we are surely not to imagine that Juvenal has memorized more than that.

26 Mariotti (1975) 150–1, 158; Heil (2002) 119–25; Dante may have in mind the prominent use of the trope in the poem of the *Achilleid*.

makes it clear that he was exposed to and influenced by Christian teaching and indeed was worshipping exclusively with Christians for some time before his baptism (*Purg.* 22.76–87), so we need not see the mid-point of the epic as marking a significant change in theological orientation. It is much more important that the rivers of Thebes are introduced as a pointed contrast to the true waters of baptism in which the poet found eternal life. It turns out that the rivers are a cryptic reference to a certain point not in the *Thebaid*, but in the *Commedia*.

The canto in which Statius first appears begins by contrasting the thirst for secular knowledge and the true water of faith. The pilgrim is desperately thirsting to know the cause of the earthquake that he and Vergil experienced at the end of the previous canto. Statius comes up behind them and explains that it was the sign that he has just completed his term of expiation and is free now to make his way to Paradise. Dante exclaims at the pleasure in having his thirst for knowledge quenched so thoroughly (*Purg.* 21.73–5). That is to say, at the rough middle-point of the *Commedia* as a whole, Statius has quenched the pilgrim's thirst, thus acting out for Dante the role played by Hypsipyle, "she who showed Langia" (22.112), for the Argives in the middle of the *Thebaid*.²⁷ That interlude in the middle of Statius' epic serves as a break in the grim action, and the joyous liberation of Statius from his penance and the beginning of his ascent to the beatific vision are a relief from the suffering of the rest of the *Purgatorio*.²⁸ The point of this complex of allusions is to show that we have now arrived at the equivalent central turning-point of the *Commedia*. It anticipates the moment at the end of the *Purgatorio* (33.127–35) when Dante and Statius drink together from the river Eunoe to ascend into Paradise. Thirst for divine revelation has replaced the thirst of an army on the march as the mainspring of the epic plot.²⁹

So if the rivers of Thebes are not the vital clue, where are we to start? Let us turn back to the very beginning of the *Purgatorio*, where we meet another pagan whom we all know should not really be there. When we encounter Cato, it is much more the character from Lucan whom we meet than the historical

27 A similar point is made on different grounds by Wetherbee (2008) 187: "Statius, as embodied in the *Thebaid*, is for Dante a kind of Hypsipyle."

28 Hollander (1969) 69: "The apparition of the saved Statius is the surest evidence Dante has yet been granted of the actual Salvation found in Christ."

29 Caviglia (1974) 269–70 makes the connection between Statius and Hypsipyle, but wrongly presumes on the basis of the pseudo-Fulgentian allegory that these figures must bear unsatisfactory secular knowledge. In fact, the opposite is true; Statius is very clearly a *figura Christi* for the pilgrim in these cantos: Hollander (1969) 67–9; Heilbronn (1977); Kleinhenz (1988a) 37–8.

figure.³⁰ He rebukes Vergil sharply and exposes the limits of his theological knowledge (*Purg.* 1.85–108); Dante's Vergil was master of all of hell's secrets, but he is as ignorant as the pilgrim Dante among the saved.³¹ Cato thus functions with respect to Dante's Vergil as an analogue for the role played by Lucan vis-à-vis the real Vergil in the Latin epic tradition, savagely critiquing his theological certainty and his picture of the relationship between men and the Olympian gods. There can be no clearer illustration of Dante's keen understanding of the way Lucan eviscerated Vergil's prophetic authority than his startling invention of the story that Erichtho, Lucan's necromancer, his ersatz Sibyl, compelled the newly dead corpse of Vergil to serve her against his will (*Inf.* 9.22–30).³² One of the most striking aspects of Lucan's epic is, of course, the failure of the Olympian gods to appear. The gods whom Vergil had trusted to ensure the working out of a glorious Roman destiny have gone missing, and mortal efforts to communicate with them range from the ineffectual to the grotesque. It is no longer clear to the reader that the gods exist, and it is certainly not the case that there is any supernatural guarantee for Rome's destiny. Instead of a teleology of conquest ending in Augustan peace, Roman history is conceived of as an endless cycle of civil wars.

Dante understands that Cato is not Lucan's mouthpiece and distinguishes between the agonized despair of the poet and the clear-eyed self-certainty of his creation.³³ The pure negativity of Lucan's demolition of the "false and lying gods" of Vergil (*dèi falsi e bugiardi*, *Inf.* 1.72) offers no theological way forward.³⁴ His Cato does, however. Dante, in his dedicatory epistle to Cangrande, quotes on the subject of the ubiquity of God (63) a famous line from Cato's refusal to consult the oracle of Ammon (*Luc.* 9.580), as an example of theological wisdom to be found in pagan texts. The question that remained for writers after Lucan is whether there could be any longer a sensible role in epic for the gods or indeed for meaningful, teleological narratives. Statius' answer to this question is what fascinated Dante. He creates a world every bit as cruel and indifferent to human suffering as Lucan's; it could never be considered a return to Vergilian certainty. Yet at the same time it is a world, like that of Lucan's Cato, in which human choices are not futile; where the same mistakes are not destined to be repeated eternally. Statius does this, moreover, in a way that makes

30 His long white hair and beard (*Purg.* 1.31–6) fit better with Lucan's description (2.375–6) than with the historical Cato who died at the age of 49.

31 Caviglia (1974) 267–8.

32 Butler (2003).

33 Wetherbee (2008) 103–11.

34 On the radical atheism and the nihilism of Lucan, see Sklenář (2003) 1–12.

clear that this darker vision was always part of the *Aeneid*. Lucan's unspoken presence in the middle of the epic tradition is what renders the gesture of respect Statius makes to Vergil at the end of the *Thebaid* something more than simply a routine genuflection to authority. Statius reaffirmed the centrality of Vergil which Lucan had done much to question while acknowledging the substance of Lucan's critique. Dante has his Statius repeat that gesture in the *Purgatorio* (21.130–1), when he attempts to embrace Vergil's feet. Dante thus recapitulates the dynamic of the Latin epic tradition, for Cato's disturbing and destabilizing presence at the start of the *Purgatorio* is similarly the prerequisite for the rehabilitation of Vergil's spiritual authority that the meeting with Statius accomplishes.

Dante's *Thebaid*

We can now begin to sketch the lineaments of an organic Christian interpretation of the *Thebaid*, beginning with the story of Coroebus in the first book of the *Thebaid*.³⁵ Adrastus tells how Apollo, having just killed the monstrous Python at Delphi, came to Argos and raped the daughter of the king. After she and her child are killed, Apollo “belatedly” (*sero memor*, *Theb.* 1.596) retaliates, sending against Argos a monster to kill the children of the city. Coroebus leads a successful mission to kill the beast, which so infuriates Apollo that he sends a plague upon the city; to end it he demands that the youths who killed his monster should be sacrificed. Coroebus offers himself willingly to the god and effectively shames Apollo into sparing him and his city.³⁶ One can easily imagine Dante viewing Coroebus' self-sacrifice for the good of his community as resembling Christ on the one hand and Cato on the other.³⁷ The similarity of the monster killed by the Argives in self-defense and the Python killed by Apollo highlights the unfairness of the situation. From the point of view of a Christianizing interpretation, this episode not only shows the amorality of the pagan gods, it also holds up as a paragon a Christ-like man who breaks the cycle of tit-for-tat retribution, rejecting the Old Testament law of an eye for an eye, by offering himself willingly as a sacrifice. The monstrous serpent which later kills Opheltes has obvious parallels with the Python and the child-killing creature that Coroebus killed; indeed, Statius compares the serpent to the Python (5.531–3). The child is attacked by the animal while

35 Cf. Lewis (1956) 136–7.

36 Feeney (1991) 357–8; Dominik (1994b) 63–70; Miller (2009) 118.

37 Wetherbee (2008) 174–5.

asleep on the grass, just as happened to Apollo's ill-fated son (1.582–90, 5.502–4). The Argives kill the monster, an act for which no explicit revenge is taken; but the father of the boy desires revenge for Hypsipyle's negligence, which is prevented by the Argives and by her two sons' sudden recognition of their mother, an episode that Dante refers to later in describing his own change from grief to joy (*Purg.* 26.94–6).

Another part of the epic which has been linked to Statius' Christianity is the *katabasis* of Apollo's priest Amphiaraus, whose piety cannot save him. When he is swallowed up by the earth, the shades are just as surprised to see a flesh-and-blood creature as are the souls in Purgatory to see the not-dead pilgrim Dante (*Theb.* 8.1–20). The descent of Amphiaraus (recalled at *Inf.* 20.31–9) is thus an antitype for the earthquake that signals Statius' ascent from bondage.³⁸ The Argives wonder at Apollo's ingratitude to his priest (*sic gratus Apollo?*, *Theb.* 8.176), and the god himself later laments his inability to save him while consoling Diana for her similar failure to protect Parthenopaeus (9.650–62).³⁹ Apollo even denies he is worth being worshipped (9.657). From a Christian point of view, thus does paganism confess its own supersession. Not long afterward, Tiresias announces that the price of Thebes' victory is the sacrifice of Menoeceus, who commits suicide with some encouragement from the divine personification of Virtus (10.628–782), recapitulating the principled suicide of his nephew Maeon near the beginning of the epic (3.53–113). Thus another Christ-like figure sacrifices himself upon command of the gods to save his community, though the moral triumph of Coroeus is absent and the outcome is far sadder. At this point in the epic, the dominant figures become personifications such as Virtus, Pietas and Clementia on the one hand and Furies like Tisiphone on the other; they eclipse the Olympian gods, who have abandoned the field. This development is well-known and will have surely encouraged medieval readers to read the end of the poem in an allegorical vein.⁴⁰

The end of the *Thebaid* is dominated by the female office of burial of the dead, and one could argue that the women of the epic are its true heroes. It is telling that, when Vergil and Statius discuss the virtuous pagans in Limbo of mutual acquaintance, the males are all ancient poets and the females are Statius' own mythical heroines (*Purg.* 22.97–114). The Argive women seek relief at the Altar of Clemency in Athens, which has naturally seemed to many readers of Dante a crucial indication of Statius' supposed Christianity.⁴¹

38 Barchiesi (1973) 76–99; Heil (2002) 125–33.

39 Scherillo (1902) 501–2; Hardie (1916) 10–12.

40 Lewis (1936) 44–56; Feeney (1991) 364–91; Ramelli (1999) 422–4.

41 Scherillo (1902) 503–4; Vessey (1973) 311 with n. 4.

The medieval tendency to gloss *Clementia* in this passage as *Misericordia* was not necessarily as tendentious as some modern scholars claim; that was the correct Greek name (*bomos Eleou*), and *Misericordia* cannot fit in Statius' hexameter.⁴² Mercy is a feature more associated with the Christian god than with the Olympians, and Statius sets the altar in stark contrast to ordinary pagan sanctuaries. There is no graven image of the god; it accepts no expensive blood sacrifice from the powerful, but prefers the tears offered by the wretched and needy (*Theb.* 12.487–96). In this regard, it is immune to the criticisms of Lucan's Cato and Statius' Capaneus against the traditional paraphernalia of pagan religion; indeed Statius' claim that *Clementia* prefers to live in hearts and minds than in effigies (12.494) looks back to Lucan's Cato (9.578–9) as well as forward to St. Paul. It may seem a retrograde step to emphasize the importance of one episode of the *Thebaid* after insisting on the need to develop an organic Christianizing reading of its theology. It is reasonable, however, to place a significant emphasis on the role of the Altar of Mercy, for it usurps the role normally played by Zeus/Jupiter in Homeric/Vergilian epic in bringing the plot to a resolution.

In answer to the prayers of the Argive women, Theseus becomes the agent of Mercy, agreeing at once to wage a crusade against the powers of hell (*Theb.* 12.642–7).⁴³ The device on his shield shows him defeating the Minotaur who, like the monster of Coroebus, was a half-human, half-bestial creature who devoured the children of the hero's city. Theseus broke that cycle of vengeance, like Coroebus, like Hypsipyle's Argive champions, and as he will do again by ending the cruelty of Creon. Dante's implicit interpretation of the poem as ending in the triumph of a crusader for justice and mercy over the brutal law of vengeance is of course only one of many possible interpretations and will not be shared by all readers. Many view Theseus as no better than the other invaders of Thebes and have pointed to the mission of the Epigonoï against Thebes as evidence of his failure to break the cycle of retribution.⁴⁴

The Altar of Mercy is also the point where we have the only plausible candidate for an external factor which may have prompted Dante's reading of the *Thebaid*. There was a tradition that the Athenian altar at which the Argive women prayed and found relief was the very same as the altar of the unknown god in Athens which St. Paul had claimed on behalf of the Christian god in his sermon on the Areopagus, and which he, like Statius, contrasted with the

42 Burgess (1972) 347–8.

43 Lewis (1936) 55.

44 On the different views of Theseus, see Coffee (2009a) and Criado, pp. 291–306 in this volume; cf. Dominik, pp 275–83 in this volume.

emptiness of pagan cult images.⁴⁵ This is a very familiar argument with a long history in Dante scholarship, but it has long been fatally vitiated by attributing the idea to scattered glosses in individual manuscripts which there is no reason to believe Dante should have known.⁴⁶ More recently, it has been shown that this notion in fact formed part of the so-called *in principio* commentary on the *Thebaid*, which had a wider distribution.⁴⁷ I think we should go one step further and propose that Dante became familiar with the idea by reading it in its original form in the *Theologia Christiana* of Peter Abelard.⁴⁸

Dante never mentions Abelard, and it is usually assumed that he had no direct knowledge of his works, especially as he was the archenemy of St. Bernard, Dante's escort to the beatific vision at the end of the *Paradiso*. Because of the official condemnation of the theological works of Abelard, it is hard to trace their diffusion, but they were nevertheless enormously influential, and were of fundamental importance to controversies at the very heart of the *Commedia*. Echoes of Abelard have been claimed in Dante's work, but they are not conclusive; then again, definite echoes of the writings of St. Bernard are also hard to find, and Dante must surely have known those very well.⁴⁹ Dante is unique in inventing a Limbo in which the virtuous pagans continue to live after the harrowing of Hell, but the two main ingredients of this novelty are both drawn ultimately and very clearly from Abelard, who had explicitly posed the crucial question: whom exactly Christ had liberated from the dead (*Sic et Non* 84).⁵⁰ Abelard's indignation at the notion that God would punish the innocent led him to imagine a posthumous fate for unbaptized children in which there was no suffering except for the loss of supernatural heavenly bliss (*Comm. Rom.* 2.5.19). This led directly to the creation of the Catholic doctrine of Limbo for infants. Dante added to this the tragedy of insight when he put Vergil and the other virtuous pagans there, and this other half of the equation also comes from Abelard. In the *Theologia Christiana*, Abelard glorified with great vehemence the lives of the sages of antiquity and their efforts to perceive the truth without the benefit of revelation, including the Sibylline prophecy in Vergil's *Eclogue* (*Theologia Christiana*, 1.128). These are the two strands of thought that collide in the *Commedia* to produce Dante's limbo, which creates

45 *Acts* 17.22–31; cf. Landi (1913) 243–7.

46 Landi (1913); Padoan (1977) 127–8.

47 D. Anderson (1988) 187 n. 48; de Angelis (1997) 121–2 n. 126; H. Anderson (2009) 1.xxv–xxvii and 3.69–70.

48 This source was noted by de Angelis (1997) 123, but she rejected a connection with Dante.

49 Pézard (1968), esp. 61; Botterill (1994) 174–90.

50 Iannucci (2005) 69.

the tragedy of Vergil and his companions, who are knowingly deprived of the beatific vision despite the surpassing justice of their lives. Dante would surely have been very skeptical, to put it mildly, of Abelard's tendency to privilege reason over faith, but it is ungenerous to assume that he only knew of these arguments, which were so crucial to his theology, via the subsequent, derivative scholastic tradition and was ignorant of the passion with which Abelard had ignited them. If Dante was ever influenced by the heretical Abelard, it was surely in the poet's most theologically heterodox creation: a benign Limbo not just for unbaptized babies or Old-Testament patriarchs but for righteous pagan philosophers and poets.

In his reference to the *ara Clementiae*, Abelard quotes the first two lines of Statius' description and makes the suggestion, apparently on his own authority, that this was the same Athenian altar claimed by St. Paul for his god in his sermon on the Areopagus:⁵¹

Hinc est enim quod merito Deum appellabant ignotum, quasi qui a paucis uel summis sapientibus intelligeretur aut crederetur, nec in communem uulgi ueniret opinionem. Cui nec simulacrum, iuxta Macrobius, ausi sunt constituere. Quem iuxta etiam philosophos soli mundicordes et purgati animi conspiciere possunt. De quo et Lucanus ait: "Incerti Iudaea Dei," hoc est absconditi atque ignoti. Cuius quidem ignoti dei aram magnus ille philosophus Dionysius Areopagita Paulo apostolo apud egregiam studiis ciuitatem Athenas legitur ostendisse. Haec quidem, ni fallor, illa est ara misericordiae cui a supplicibus non immolabatur nisi illud Brachmanorum sacrificium, hoc est orationes uel lacrymae; cuius uidelicet arae et Statius in XII meminit, dicens: "Urbe fuit media nulli concessa potentum Ara Deum, mitis posuit clementia sedem."

THEOLOGIA CHRISTIANA 3.45

Thus it is right that they used to call God the unknown one, as if he were understood or believed by only a handful or the very wisest and did not come into the commonplace beliefs of the masses. A god whose image, according to Macrobius [*Somn. Scip.* 1.2.16], no one dared to set up. A god whom, according to the philosophers, only those of pure heart and mind are able to perceive. A god of whom Lucan [2.593] spoke when he said "Judea of the uncertain god," which is to say hidden and unknown. This

51 This is a reworking of a passage in an earlier version of the treatise (*Theologia Summi Boni* 2.22) which does not have the reference to Statius; thus we can date the genesis of Abelard's idea approximately to the years 1121–1126.

indeed is the unknown god whose altar the great philosopher Dionysius the Areopagite is said [Acts 17.23] to have shown to St. Paul in Athens, a city famed for its intellectual achievements. This is the altar of Mercy, unless I am mistaken, on which used to be sacrificed by suppliants only the [bloodless] offerings of the Brahmins, which is to say prayers and tears, the altar recorded by Statius in his twelfth book [12.481–2] where he says, “There was an altar in the middle of the city dedicated to none of the powerful gods; there gentle Clemency had her dwelling.”

In this passage, Abelard also cites Plato, Augustine, and Hermes Trismegistus on the unknowability of God. This startling mixture of pagan and Christian authorities is characteristic of and fundamental to Abelard's theological project; what is unusual is the inclusion of the two epic poets. Abelard quotes Lucan a handful of times in his work, but this is his only reference to Statius. It would certainly have caught the attention of Dante, who will immediately have realized the far-reaching poetical implications of making the Argive women unwitting worshippers at the altar of the Judeo-Christian God, which therefore displaces Jupiter as the epic's agent of closure. Reading forward and backward from that moment, an anti-Olympian, Christianizing reading of the *Thebaid* such as the one we have limned here would have been straightforward to construct.

Abelard is not saying that Statius was a Christian any more than Plato was, but the point is not that Dante borrowed Statius' Christianity from another source as a fully formed proposition. What Abelard can do is to give us an idea of how the notion of Statius' Christianity took shape in Dante's mind. To justify his Statian fiction, Dante must have believed that the *Thebaid* as a whole could bear a crypto-Christian reading; but there may well have been a seed such as this from which his interpretation germinated. If the notion that Dante read Abelard either in full or in excerpts is not acceptable, then it is perfectly possible that the poet found this remark on Statius' *ara Clementiae* elsewhere, as has often been argued; for it quickly found its way into glosses and commentaries, and indeed into medieval culture more broadly.⁵²

Did Dante view his attribution of Christianity to Statius as the historical truth? As we saw above, for Dante the “correct” reading of pagan poetry for a devout Christian is a complicated matter. The secret Christianity of Statius may be considered a rational falsehood which is spiritually true, like Statius' misreading of a line from the *Aeneid* that saved him from damnation. It seems likely that Dante willfully and knowingly invented Statius' Christianity as a

52 Padoan (1977) 128–9; Anderson (1988) 160–4.

fiction worth believing and that he expected his readers to treat it as such. His misreading reflects a higher truth, the emergence of Christian culture from pagan; it is “truth with the appearance of a lie” (*quel ver c’ha faccia di menzogna*, *Inf.* 16.124), like the *Commedia* itself.

One final question remains to ask, which is whether Dante had a point when he saw Statius as standing at a religious crossroads. One of the more striking theological episodes in the *Thebaid* is Adrastus’ grand prayer to Apollo at the end of the first book, which concludes by assimilating Apollo to Osiris and Mithras. The presence of Mithras as the emphatic last word of the first book of the epic is especially surprising, for this is an extremely early attestation.⁵³ It is thus incontrovertible that Statius was aware of and interested in the spread of what we might call eastern mystery religions of personal salvation. Just as the story of Coroebus anticipates the coming of Theseus, Mithras participates in the ring composition of the first and last books. He is described as struggling with the bull which he sacrifices, and same language is used in the final book to describe the struggle of Theseus with the Minotaur as the iconographical device on his shield.⁵⁴ This is not to say that the historical Statius was a devotee of Mithras or Isis any more than he was a Christian, but it is hard to deny that the intuition of Dante has seen something startlingly genuine and true about the theology of the *Thebaid*. Dante urges us to reread Statius, seeing him not merely as an imitator of Vergil, but one who found a way, after the savage critique of Lucan, to give back to the genre a role for the supernatural and a sense that the universe is meaningful. The fact that this new Statian theology drew on eastern religions of initiation and personal salvation which, unbeknownst to Dante, were connected with the spread of Christianity, is a remarkable confirmation of the intuition brought to bear by one great poet of religion upon the text of another.

53 Gordon (1978) 161–3; Newlands (2009a).

54 Vessey (1973) 135–6, 313; Griffith (2001) 114–15. For a very different interpretation of the connection between Mithras and Theseus, see Dominik (1992) 76–7.

The *Thebaid* in Italian Renaissance Epic: The Case of Capaneus

Pramit Chaudhuri

Narratives of Statius' literary influence tend to follow a familiar pattern: his stock was high in the Middle Ages but already declining in early modernity. Towards the end of the seventeenth century Statius' reputation as an also-ran was enshrined in Dryden's metapoetic assessment: "Statius . . . was ambitious of trying his strength with his master, Virgil, as Virgil had before tried his with Homer. . . . On these terms, this Capaneus of a poet engaged his two immortal predecessors, and his success was answerable to his enterprize."¹ Dryden's judgment, like Capaneus' destruction, foreshadows the relative obscurity into which Statius would fall, and from which he has only recently begun to emerge. Statius' modern-day anonymity, however, has also obscured his place in the development of the epic traditions of the European Renaissance, a legacy overshadowed by his prominence in the canonical literature of the Middle Ages. As a form of redress, this paper explores the presence of the *Thebaid* in one branch of early modern literature, Italian epic of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and in particular two central works of the vernacular epic tradition, Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* and Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.²

The central plot of both poems is the war between Charlemagne's paladins and the invading Saracen army led by Agramante, King of Africa. Interlaced with the main plot are a series of romantic and fantastical stories, inspired by chivalric legends, involving the Christian and pagan knights. In both Ariosto's and Boiardo's epics the leading antagonist of the Christians is the figure of Rodomonte (called "Rodamonte" in the *Innamorato*), a powerful and

¹ Dryden (1800) 427–9.

² The unfinished *Innamorato* was published in 1495, the year following Boiardo's death. Ariosto produced three versions of the *Furioso*, published in 1516, 1521, and 1532, the last and fullest of which became the standard. Quotations are drawn from the following editions: for Statius, Hill (1996a); for Boiardo, Garbato (1970); for Ariosto, Bigi (1982); and for Tasso, Maier (1982). All translations are my own. For an introduction to Italian Renaissance epic see, e.g., Burrow (1993); Quint (1993); Looney (1996); Everson (2001); Gregory (2006); Zatti (2006).

impious hero modeled on Statius' Capaneus. Although scholars have noted this intertextual connection, little has been done to explain why the epicists might have drawn on Capaneus and what implications Statius' portrayal of the hero might have for his reception.³ The reason for this neglect is disciplinary and twofold. On the classical side, the focus of reception studies has simply lain elsewhere than Italian epic, despite the rich field of allusion largely untilled by classicists.⁴ On the early modern side, most critics have reached for the more obvious classical intertexts, such as Vergil's Turnus, and have done little more than acknowledge in passing the role of Capaneus. As this chapter will show, however, allusions to Capaneus provide a consistent point of reference for the characterization of Rodomonte and have considerable explanatory power in the interpretation of Rodomonte's speech and action.

Boiardo

Perhaps the most memorable, though probably apocryphal, tale concerning the composition of the *Orlando Innamorato* centers on the figure of Rodamonte, king of Sarza, leading opponent of the Christians, and despiser of the gods. So pleased was Boiardo at his coining of Rodamonte's name, the story goes, that he had the bells of Scandiano rung in celebration.⁵ If the name was entirely original, however, the characterization owed something to classical models. Despite a longstanding awareness of Rodamonte's affinity with Capaneus, critics have yet to make full use of the implications of the similarity for Boiardo's characterization.⁶ In her analysis of Statian influence on Boiardo, Zampese lists a number of parallel passages from the *Innamorato* and the *Thebaid* which show, first, that Boiardo's depiction of Rodamonte draws mainly on two Statian episodes—Capaneus' *agon* with Amphiaraus (*Theb.* 3.598–669) as the

3 On Statius' Capaneus see Klinnert (1970); Lovatt (2005); Nau (2005); Leigh (2006).

4 On the relationship between classical reception studies and early modernity see Brockliss *et al.* (2012) 3–6. In 1994, Farrell, reviewing two landmark books on the European epic tradition, expressed the hope that classicists might “be moved to make a more serious contribution than has recently been our habit to the discourse on epic as a genre that survived and flourished beyond antiquity” (Farrell [1994]). Almost twenty years later that hope remains relatively unfulfilled.

5 Wilkins (1955).

6 The closer overlap with Capaneus was noted as early as Proto (1895) 16–17 and Razzoli (1901) 100. Yet Cavallo (1998) 103, for example, mentions only the more familiar Vergilian precedents of Turnus and Mezentius. Contrast Zampese (1993) and Ross (2004) xxiii–xxiv, which do take account of Statius' Capaneus.

basis for Rodamonte's two arguments with Branzardo, Sobrino, and the King of Garamanta (*OI* 2.1.38–62 and 2.3.17–36), and Capaneus' assault on Thebes (*Theb.* 10.738–939) as the basis for Rodamonte's siege of Paris (*OI* 3.8.25–30)—and second, that Boiardo's Italian at times alludes to or even echoes the Latin text.⁷ During the siege of Paris, for example, the manner of damage done to the city by Rodamonte closely echoes the description in the *Thebaid*:

Quei pezzi lancia dentro dalla terra,
Dissipa case e campanili e chiese.

OI 3.8.30

He hurls these pieces to the ground within,
breaks apart houses, steeples, and churches.

absiliunt pontes, tectique trementis
saxea frena labant, dissaepoque aggere rursus
utitur et truncas rupes in templa domosque
praecipitat.

THEB. 10.879–82

Bridges fall away, the stone restraints of the shuddering
roof collapse, and again he uses the sundered rampart
and hurls fragments of rock against temples and houses.

Both heroes turn the very defenses of the city into weapons, but beyond the resemblance in action Boiardo also signals the debt to his source in diction—*case* and *chiese* adapt *domos* and *templa* respectively, and, most strikingly, *dissipa* is the Italian derivate from the root of Latin *dissaepo*. These lexical similarities are only the most obvious signs of the extent to which the Statian source permeated these episodes. The question of why Boiardo might have chosen to draw on this particular model, however, remains unexplained. The answer, I suggest, lies in the specific nature of Capaneus' impiety and his way of knowing the world.

As Cavallo has observed, questions of how one obtains knowledge, and the utility of that knowledge, animate Rodamonte's exchanges with his fellow pagans in the early cantos of book 2 and his subsequent appearances in the poem.⁸ The two main episodes in which these exchanges occur take place

⁷ Zampese (1993) 401–6, 416–17.

⁸ Cavallo (2002).

after Agramante, the Saracen king of Africa, declares his intent to invade France. The ensuing debates among his subject kings, including Rodamonte, place a heavy emphasis on epistemological concerns that eventually illuminate Rodamonte as a hero in the mold of Statius' Capaneus. The various responses to Agramante's plan include not only claims to know the world but also theoretical justifications of those claims to knowledge. The very first reply begins by placing the theme of knowledge front and center:

Tutte le cose de che se ha scïenzia,
O ver che son provate per ragione,
O per esempio, o per esperienza.

OI 2.1.39

All the things of which one has knowledge,
are proven true by reason,
or example, or experience.

In the following three stanzas the speaker, Branzardo, fleshes out his opposition to the war according to each of those categories—reason, example, or experience—the cumulative effect of which, Branzardo believes, demonstrates the absolute and undeniable truth of his position. The next speaker, Sobrino, is no less discouraging about the prospects for the war, and he too attempts to justify his claims to knowledge. In discussing possible means of approach to France, he invokes the authority of experience (*Quei lochi ho tutti quanti già cercati*, “all of those I have already tried,” OI 2.1.47), a point he repeats in the final stanza of his speech when reporting the excellence of the Christian knights: *Cognosco Gano e cognosco il Danese . . . Io gli ho provati* (“I know Gano and I know the Dane . . . I tested them,” 51).⁹ Rodamonte then rises to dismiss these arguments as the product of senility, drawing an analogy between the fading flame of a candle and the diminishing mental powers of old age (53). The metaphor of the candle, and the vocabulary of seeing with which Rodamonte frames his judgment of Branzardo and Sobrino (*Questo ben chiaro si vede nel presente*, “at present this is clearly seen,” 54), emphasize the power and authority of visual perception, as if to suggest that Rodamonte doubts the validity of any claim that he himself has not seen to be true. This is the first in a series of comments that characterize Rodamonte as a skeptic and empiricist,

9 Sobrino is partly modeled on Vergil's Drances (Razzoli [1901] 100) and Silius' Hanno. The reception of the *Punica* in Italian epic remains especially neglected.

albeit one so fundamentalist in his view as to seem a caricature of any serious philosophical position.¹⁰

Drawing eclectically on classical philosophical sources from Plato and Aristotle to Cicero and Seneca, Cavallo reads into the argument an important epistemological conflict: "One could thus say that Rodamonte counters the moral philosophical tradition with scientific observation of natural phenomena and human nature, replacing 'experience, example, and reason' with 'sight' as the privileged mode of knowledge acquisition."¹¹ Cavallo's broad epistemological distinction between the heroes, while productive, accepts Rodamonte's rhetoric and thereby flattens certain nuances. Sobrino's argument, for instance, depends on personal experience in the form of autopsy—he has sought out the means of access to France, he has encountered the Christian knights in person—the very form of "scientific" knowledge privileged by Rodamonte and distinct from the "moral philosophical tradition." Boiardo seems to be suggesting, in other words, that in rejecting Sobrino's autopsy, the form of knowledge that Rodamonte himself approves, his skepticism and empiricism boil down to little more than the assertion of his own will.

The subsequent argument with the King of Garamanta (*OI* 2.1.57–61) further confirms the characterization of Rodamonte as a skeptic of others' claims who values only what he has seen for himself. Boiardo deploys a number of Statian allusions to structure the exchange. The King of Garamanta, prophet of the god *Apollino* (57), predicts disaster for the invasion (59) on the model of Amphiaraus, prophet of Apollo, who uses divinatory methods to foresee the failure of the Argive expedition in book 3 of the *Thebaid*. Rodamonte dismisses the power of prophecy in his riposte to the King of Garamanta, closely echoing the parting shot of Capaneus in the *agon* with Amphiaraus:¹²

—Mentre che siam qua,—disse—io son contento
Che quivi profetezi a tuo talento;

10 Rodamonte will change his opinion about the validity of Sobrino's experience when, several cantos later (*OI* 2.15.30), he acknowledges the valor of the Christian knight Ranaldo. It may be an exaggeration, however, to speak of Rodamonte going "from one extreme to another" (Cavallo [2002] 310), at least in epistemological terms, when the extent of the change seems to be that Rodamonte's theory of knowledge accepts claims to experience other than his own (note the repetition of *provato* at *OI* 2.15.29 and 30). By contrast, it is pointedly not the case that Rodamonte shows any signs of changing his mind about the supernatural knowledge of the prophet-king of Garamanta.

11 Cavallo (2002) 307.

12 On the Statian *agon* see Lovatt (2001) 118; Stover (2009).

Ma quando tutti avrem passato il mare,
 E Franza strugghieremo a ferro e a foco,
 Non me venistù intorno a indovinare,
 Perch'io serò il profeta di quel loco.

OI 2.1.60–1

“While we are here,” he says, “I am happy
 for you to prophesy all you desire,

“but when we have all crossed the sea,
 and are destroying France by sword and flame,
 don’t come to me with your divinations,
 for in that place I will be the prophet.”

et tibi tuto

nunc eat iste furor; sed prima ad classica cum iam
 hostilem Ismenon galeis Dircenque bibemus,
 ne mihi tunc, moneo, lituos atque arma uolenti
 obuius ire pares uenisque aut alite uisa
 bellorum proferre diem: procul haec tibi mollis
 infula terrificique aberit dementia Phoebi:
 illic augur ego et mecum quicumque parati
 insanire manu.

THEB. 3.661–9

So now while safe

let that frenzy come to you; but at the first trumpet blast, as
 we drink from our helms the hostile waters of Ismenus and Dirce,
 do not try to get in my way, I warn you, when I desire
 the clarion call and arms, nor to put off the day of battle by veins
 and the sighting of birds: far away will be that soft ribbon of yours
 and the madness of dread Phoebus:
 there I shall be augur and all who are prepared with me
 to be frenzied in fight.

Although the vocabulary of the Italian differs from the Latin, Boiardo has taken the rhetorical content of the Statian *agon* to heart: both speeches dismiss the validity of prophecy in favor of martial feats that have the power not only to predict but also to determine the future.

At the end of the council scene in *Orlando Innamorato* 2.1 the King of Garamanta pronounces an oracle that the invasion can only hope to succeed if joined by the knight Rugiero, who has been hidden away by the magician Atlante. The search for Rugiero begins in 2.3, and the initial frustration of not being able to find him leads to a second, and more thought-provoking, argument about the validity of divination, one that draws on the intellectual substance, as well as the rhetoric, of the Statian *agon*. King Mulabuferso, sent to look for Rugiero, not only reports that he has been unable to find him, but also casts suspicion on the prophetic arts of the King of Garamanta (2.3.18–19). Taking Mulabuferso's doubts as a cue to reiterate his own skepticism, Rodamonte makes the clearest statement yet of his epistemological point of view: *Mal aggia l'omo che dà tanta fede / Al ditto di altri e a quel che non si vede!* ("cursed be the man who has such faith in the words of others and in that which he hasn't seen for himself!", 2.3.20).¹³ He then ties his reliance on autopsy to a more general skepticism about divine influence and even the existence of the gods, the premises that underlie the claims to knowledge of the prophet-king:

Se egli è alcun dio nel cel, ch'io nol so certo,
 Là stassi ad alto, e di qua giù non cura:
 Omo non è che l'abbia visto esperto,
 Ma la vil gente crede per paura.

OI 2.3.22

If there is any god in heaven, of which I'm not sure,
 his concern is on high, and not down here:
 there is no man who has witnessed him for certain,
 but the cowardly people believe from fear.

This is again a direct allusion to Capaneus:

miseret superum, si carmina curae
 humanaeque preces. quid inertia pectora terres?
 primus in orbe deos fecit timor!

THEB. 3.659–61

13 Cavallo (2002) 308–9. Behind Rodamonte's words may lie a parody of Jeremiah 17:5: *haec dicit Dominus maledictus homo qui confidit in homine et ponit carnem brachium suum et a Domino recedit cor eius* ("thus says the Lord, 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord'").

I pity the gods if they take heed of humans'
 hymns or prayers. Why do you terrify cowardly hearts?
 Fear first made gods in the world!

The intertextuality with the paradigmatically impious Capaneus emphasizes Rodamonte's own impiety, to be sure, but Boiardo's particular choice of allusion incorporates elements of the philosophical conflict about divination and the gods from the Statian *agon* into Boiardo's epic.

Thus, Capaneus' skepticism of divination and his elevation of his own physical faculties become Rodamonte's empiricism, manifested in his privileging of sight as a means to knowledge and in his self-reliance.¹⁴ Accordingly, where Capaneus vaunts his own might and arms as his god (*uirtus mihi numen et ensis / quem teneo!*, *Theb.* 3.615–16), Boiardo puts similar rhetoric into the mouth of Rodamonte:¹⁵

Io de mia fede vi ragiono aperto
 Che solo il mio bon brando e l'armatura
 E la maza ch'io porto e 'l destrier mio
 E l'animo ch'io ho, sono il mio dio.

OI 2.3.22

I speak of my faith openly to you,
 that it is only my good sword and armor
 and the mace that I carry and my charger
 and the heart that I have—I am my own god.

Beyond the direct correspondences—*brando* ~ *ensis*, *porto* ~ *teneo*, *animo* ~ *uirtus*, and *mio dio* ~ *mihi numen*—Boiardo has freely expanded upon the brief source passage. In light of the Statian evidence, then, one can analyze Rodamonte's epistemological position in quite specific terms: a materialist

14 For Statius' mediation of issues of belief, empiricism, and testing through the figure of Capaneus, see Chaudhuri (2014) 256–97.

15 Boiardo may be alluding to Statius' own source, a speech by Vergil's Mezentius (*dextra mihi deus et telum, quod missile libro, / nunc adsint!*, "now let my right hand, my god, and the weapon I poise to hurl, be favorable!", *Aen.* 10.773–4), but the Italian more closely resembles Statius' Latin.

and autoptic empiricism descended from Statius' Capaneus more than any other source.¹⁶

As Cavallo points out, several philosophical schools in Quattrocento Italy engaged in epistemological questions about sense-perception, deduction, and religious faith.¹⁷ The Statian intertext, however, allows for a more robust claim for a particular ancient school—Epicureanism.¹⁸ The ancient commentary on the *Thebaid* attributed to Lactantius, which Boiardo seems to have used, associates Capaneus' notion of remote or disinterested gods with Epicureanism: *totum hoc secundum Epicurum dicit poeta* ("the poet says the whole of this following Epicurus," Lact. *ad Theb.* 3.659–60).¹⁹ The commentator then goes on to quote a passage on the impassivity of the gods from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (2.646–51) in order to substantiate the connection between Capaneus' remark and Epicurean philosophy. If Boiardo had consulted this particular part of Lactantius while reading *Thebaid* 3.659–60, he would have seen an explicit connection between his model for Rodamonte and a materialist and empiricist philosophy.²⁰ The implications of this connection, however, are problematic. With his bellicosity and seeming desire to provoke the gods, Capaneus seems anything but Epicurean; whether he should be seen as

16 Rodamonte's claim to test heaven's power (*E provarò se 'l celo ha tal possanza*, *OI* 2.3.35) sounds an empirical note recalling Capaneus' two claims to "test" (*experiar*) the power of augury and sacrifice (*Theb.* 3.617–8 and 10.847, respectively; cf. *esperto* at *OI* 2.3.22).

17 Cavallo (2002) 305–8. Alexandre (1983) 138–9 suggests other contemporary philosophical influences on the poem.

18 Cf. Garbato (1970) 2.302. For the empiricism of Epicurean philosophy, see Asmis (2009).

19 Sweeney (1997) 231–2. For Boiardo's familiarity with Lactantius, see Zampese (1993) 398–400. Bertoni (1925–1926) 716 records a copy of Lactantius in the 1467 inventory of the library of Borso d'Este, whose courtiers included Boiardo. On the fifteenth-century editions of Lactantius, see Sweeney (1969) 111–13.

20 Rodamonte's first words in the *Innamorato*—the analogy between the weakening of a candle's flame and decline in old age (*OI* 2.1.53)—may owe something to Lucretius' discussion of light at *De Rerum Natura* 5.281–305. Boiardo's *fiamma*, *prima*, *sempre*, *lume*, and *perde* may echo Lucr. 5.304 in particular, *et primum quicquid flammaram perdere semper* ("and whatever comes first of the flames always perishes"), and the multiple forms of *lumen* that occur throughout the passage. Lucretius uses the analogy of a lamp, with its ceaselessly rising and dying flames, to explain that the light of the sun, moon, and stars is not continuous and indestructible but must constantly be supplied anew. That passage is set within a larger argument for the mortality of the world, its subjection to physical and natural processes, and the limits of divine power. Rodamonte's language, if alluding to Lucretius, strikes at fundamental principles of Christian metaphysics, especially the omnipotence of God. For Boiardo's concern with mortality, permanence, and Christianity, see Quint (1979) 83 and 89 n. 15.

parodying the philosophy or simply exaggerating aspects of it is an impossible question to resolve. Whatever Boiardo might have known of Epicureanism—he at least knew Lucretius' poem, as attested by the allusions to the hymn to Venus at the opening of *Orlando Innamorato* 2.12—the motivation to emphasize Rodamonte's empiricism may have originated with the philosophical heft lent to Capaneus by Lactantius. Even a whiff of Epicureanism, however, was not without complications. Lucretius' depiction of physical processes and distant gods was received with some ambivalence by Christian humanists who admired the work's poetry but condemned its theology.²¹ Thus, Rodamonte's threat to Christianity springs not only, within the narrative, from his martial feats on behalf of Agramante's Muslim army, but also, allegorically, from his materialist and empiricist inheritance.

Ariosto

Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, first published in 1516 some twenty years after the *Innamorato*, continues, but also overlaps with, the plot of Boiardo's unfinished epic; the siege of Paris, for instance, is narrated again fourteen cantos into the *Furioso*. Over the course of its circuitous plot the poem kills off the pagan knights of the *Innamorato* one by one, culminating with the death of Rodomonte in the forty-sixth and final canto. Like Boiardo, Ariosto turns to Statius for the characterization of Rodomonte, whose importance within the poem is suggested by the emphatic position given to his death.²² Connections between the *Furioso* and the *Thebaid* have been noted since the sixteenth century, but the principal focus has not been Rodomonte, but rather the story of Cloridano and Medoro (*OF* 18.165–19.16) and its allusions to the episode of Hopleus and Dymas (*Theb.* 10.347–448).²³ The relative neglect of Rodomonte's

21 See Prosperi (2004); Brown (2010); Greenblatt (2011).

22 Ariosto's use of Capaneus was noted by Panizzi (1830–1834) 7.411 and even as early as Erasmo di Valvasone's contributions to Lodovico Dolce's 1566 Valvassori edition of the *Furioso*.

23 For Ariosto's general use of Statius see Romizi (1896) 132–46; Rajna (1975) index s.v. *Stazio*; Javitch (1991) 54–60. For Ariosto's practice of combinatorial imitation, see Javitch (1985). On the Cloridano and Medoro episode, see Saccone (1968); Javitch (1985) 220–2; Burrow (1993) 63–6; Ferroni (2008) 304–8. A second and less discussed allusion to the *Thebaid* is the description of the Cave of Sleep (*OF* 14.85–97), which alludes to *ekphraseis* in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the *Thebaid*; see Burrow (1999) 279–80. Cf. Il Cieco's use of Statius in his description of the abode of Mars in the *Mambriano* (noted by Panizzi [1830–1834] 1.370).

Statian heritage is all the more surprising given that the character provides a good instance of Ariosto's combination of classical and contemporary influences in forming one of the main heroes of the poem.²⁴ Although the model provided by the Rodamonte of the *Innamorato* makes it difficult to discern when Ariosto is looking back to Boiardo and when to Statius, allusions to Statius' Latin and to parts of the *Thebaid* not used by Boiardo strongly suggest points of direct reference to the *Thebaid*.

One important way in which Ariosto's Rodomonte differs from his counterpart in the *Innamorato* is the removal of much of the intellectual component inherited from Statius' Capaneus. Whereas Boiardo had developed the *agon* between Capaneus and Amphiaraus into an epistemological thread of his own, Ariosto makes no significant use of the debate scene in the *Thebaid*.²⁵ Indeed, in some respects he reverses the skeptical characterization of Boiardo's Rodamonte.²⁶ Ariosto's hero, for instance, is overly trusting of claims made by various characters, even Isabella's quite fanciful assertion that by decapitating her he will become invulnerable (*OF* 29.23). The cumulative effect of Rodomonte's portrayal is ironic, namely that a figure so unusual among all the characters in the epic for his skeptical attitude to religion—one "who does not believe in God" (*ch'in Dio non crede*, *OF* 28.99)—can be so credulous in all other respects. Despite his martial feats, then, Rodomonte's grandiloquent impiety merely parodies the skepticism of Boiardo's hero. Indeed, if Ariosto saw in Capaneus a parody of skepticism, as have certain modern critics, then his comically credulous Rodomonte should perhaps be seen as a correction of Boiardo's philosophical "over-reading."²⁷

Even when Ariosto preserves Statian elements that Boiardo had used in the representation of Rodamonte, as in the siege of Paris, there is evidence that far from taking over Boiardo's treatment wholesale he also kept an eye on the Statian source itself. Although, compared to Boiardo, Ariosto prefers to allude to the *Thebaid* through similarity of action and motif rather than lexical correspondence, he does at times verbally echo Statius' text. An example of such general resemblance is Rodomonte's desire to ascend the wall by a

24 Wiggins (1983) (slightly modified in Wiggins [1986]), for example, has little to say about Rodomonte's classical models.

25 The omission cannot be explained away as the mere desire to avoid repetition of elements from the *Innamorato*, since Ariosto elsewhere, for instance in Rodomonte's assault on Paris, echoes the corresponding scene by Boiardo, complete with allusions to Capaneus.

26 Cavallo (2002) 311–14. Cf. Weaver (2003).

27 For criticism of Capaneus' use of philosophical-sounding language, see Vessey (1973) 158; Ahl (1986) 2899.

difficult route (*sol Rodomonte sprezza di venire, / se non dove la via meno è sicura*, “Rodomonte alone scorns to go except where the way is least safe,” *OF* 14.117), which thematically alludes to the “high valor” (*ardua uirtus*, *Theb.* 10.845) that bids Capaneus climb “where the tower is slippery with Menoeceus’ blood” (*Menoceo qua lubrica sanguine turris*, 846).²⁸ A more precise echo may be heard, however, in the indiscriminate slaughter that the two heroes visit on the enemy, where the tricolon formula combined with the equivalence of *etade* and *aetas* points to direct usage: *che non discerne sesso, ordine, etade* (“who does not regard sex, rank, or age,” *OF* 16.25); *non ullius aetas, / non cultus, non forma mouet* (“neither age, nor dress, nor beauty moves him,” *Theb.* 10.751–2).

Finally, in the most striking case, Ariosto seems to have modified a scene from the *Innamorato* while incorporating different verbal recollections of the Statian original. Two passages describe Rodomonte’s destruction of walls, houses, and shrines within the city: *ma contra i tetti ancor, sì che n’incende / le belle case e i profanati tempi* (“but he turned also against the buildings, setting fire to the fine houses and desecrated temples,” *OF* 16.26); *le belle case e i sacri templi accende* (“he sets fire to the fine houses and sacred temples,” 16.85). Comparison with the corresponding passages in Boiardo and Statius,²⁹ shows that while Ariosto’s *tetti*, *case*, and *templi* pick up Boiardo’s *case e campanili e chiese* (*OI* 3.8.30), they bear a closer affinity with Statius’ *tecti* and *templa domosque* (*Theb.* 10.879, 881). Zampese points out that Boiardo had substituted for Statius’ *templa* the less anachronistic and culturally more apt *campanili e chiese*. Ariosto perhaps returns to the Statian diction, then, to suggest a lack of proper religious practice on the part of the Parisians, who have thus in a sense become pagan themselves, drawing the ire of God in the form of Rodomonte’s assault.³⁰

Ariosto’s allusions to Capaneus do not solely respond to passages of the *Thebaid* already used by Boiardo; in the last canto of the *Furioso*, the intertextuality with the *Thebaid* is substantial and original. After the Christian victory, Rodomonte, the last surviving pagan hero, interrupts the marriage celebra-

28 Cf. both heroes’ moments of near-flight: Rodomonte’s leaping across a thirty-foot trench (*OF* 14.129–30), and Capaneus’ levitation above Thebes (*Theb.* 10.861–2). Much later in the poem, Ariosto may parody the diction of Capaneus’ ascent (*uacuoque sub aere pendens*, *Theb.* 10.861), and thereby Rodomonte’s leap, when Bradamante unseats Rodomonte from his horse (*in aria lo sospese*, *OF* 35.48).

29 See above, p. 529.

30 Zampese (1993) 417. For Ariosto’s condemnation of the Parisians, see *OF* 17.1–6, where Rodomonte is cast as a *flagellum dei* sent to punish their sins.

tions of the convert Ruggiero³¹ to challenge him to a duel. Commentators have usually focused on the episode's connections with the final duel of the *Aeneid*, with Ruggiero playing the part of Aeneas and Rodomonte that of Turnus, but they have largely neglected Ariosto's incorporation of the boxing match between Capaneus and Alcidas in book 6 of the *Thebaid*.³²

The duel between Rodomonte and Ruggiero draws on a tradition of contests in epic, both sporting and martial, that follow a consistent pattern in which a larger, stronger man faces a smaller, nimbler opponent. While the two types of combatant may be a constant feature, however, the outcome of such contests varies. So, for instance, the gigantic Entellus overcomes Dares in the *Aeneid* (5.362–484), while Amycus falls to the small and nimble Pollux in the Argonautic myth (Ap. Rhod. 2.1–97, V. Fl. 4.199–329). The contest between Capaneus and Alcidas in the *Thebaid* falls somewhere in between, since although Alcidas is clearly more successful in the match itself, the prize is awarded to Capaneus for fear that otherwise he might kill Alcidas. Ariosto's duel similarly pits against each other two warriors of paradigmatically different build and style. Rodomonte's size and strength (*un corpo così grande e così grosso*, "a body so tall and so hefty," OF 46.128) contrast with the agility and proficiency of Ruggiero (*Ruggiero avea destrezza, avea grande arte, / era alla lotta esercitato molto*, "Ruggiero had dexterity, had great skill, was much practiced at wrestling," 132). A similar disparity appears in the Statian model too, in which Capaneus' size is compared to the giant Tityos, while Alcidas is described as little more than a boy (*Theb.* 6.753–7). Indeed, Alcidas' skill and experience are repeatedly emphasized—*doctior* ("more skillful," 765), *prouidus astu / et patria uigil arte* ("prudent and crafty, and with his country's gift for vigilance," 769–70), *is uigor ingenio, tanta experientia dextrae est* ("such force is in his talent, such experience in his right hand," 775).

In the course of the combat itself, Rodomonte notices the wounds inflicted by his opponent (*si uide in tante parti rosse*, "he sees [his armor] bloodied in so

31 The same character as Boiardo's Rugiero.

32 On the reception of the Vergilian duel, see Sitterson (1992). The parallels between Rodomonte and Turnus are several: Rodomonte fights without his accustomed arms, his sword shatters mid-combat, and upon his death his indignant soul flees to the underworld (OF 46.140). Javitch (2010) 402 is mistaken, then, to claim that until the moment of death the description of the duel "contains no imitation or even allusion to the closing segment of *Aeneid*." Romizi (1896) 134 and Rajna (1975) 605 note an allusion to the wrestling match between Tydeus and Agylleus (OF 46.134 with *Theb.* 6.888–93, 902–3), which, along with the allusions to Capaneus, suggest Ariosto's conflation of two contests from the games of *Thebaid* 6. It is important to recognize, however, the continuity of Capaneus as a point of reference across several of Rodomonte's appearances in the poem.

many places," *OF* 46.121); so too Capaneus, who "[sees] the marks on the hide" of his glove (*maculas in uellere uidit, Theb.* 6.786). Rodomonte's resulting frenzy is described in terms of a winter storm (*a maggior rabbia, a più furor si mosse, / ch'a mezzo il verno il tempestoso mare*, "he is stirred to a greater rage, a greater frenzy, than the sea in a mid-winter storm," *OF* 46.121). Capaneus' fury likewise increases through the fight (*furentem, Theb.* 6.778; *furit...furit*, 809–10), and Statius too deploys a simile at the moment when the hero becomes aware of his wounds (*non leo, non iaculo tantum indignata recepto / tigris*, "no lion, no tiger struck by the javelin was so furious," 787–8).

In both encounters, and differently from the duel in the *Aeneid* and other analogues, the critical moment involves the larger man being overturned and pitched onto his head (*OF* 46.134, *Theb.* 6.802–4). This dexterous move precipitates the victories of both Ruggiero and Alcidas, but whereas Capaneus rises intending to kill his Spartan opponent, Ariosto instead has Ruggiero offer Rodomonte the opportunity to yield. When the implacable pagan continues to attack, Ruggiero is forced to kill him, as Aeneas killed Turnus. Where Turnus' surrender, however, has caused some blame to be attached to Aeneas' act of violence, Rodomonte's relentless hostility, an attribute appropriate to the relentless Capaneus, absolves the Christian hero of any lack of chivalry. Through combinatorial allusion, then, Ariosto reconfigures past epic contests to suggest a hypothetical struggle between Ruggiero/Aeneas and Rodomonte/Capaneus—a grand, anachronistic encounter for which there could exist no real precedent. For Ruggiero to overcome this Capaneus of an opponent not only elevates the duel over Aeneas' rather mismatched victory, it also lends to the struggle between Christian and pagan a more meaningful subtext—no standard epic hero is defeated, but rather the paradigmatic enemy of God.

More so than in Statius' boxing match, however, Ariosto unambiguously describes the failure of the impious hero. That failure appears far more emphatic and deliberately designed when one sees that the career of Rodomonte is an embarrassing distortion of Capaneus' arc in the *Thebaid*. Capaneus progresses from the loss of the boxing match in book 6 to the spectacular feats of book 10, to which only Jupiter can put an end; Ariosto reverses that trajectory as Rodomonte moves from the apex of his achievement at Paris, through repeated romantic failure with Doralice and Isabella, through the humiliation of being unseated by the female knight Bradamante, to the final abandonment of the arms and armor that used to define him, and his eventual defeat and death at the hands of the recent Christian convert, Ruggiero. What in the *Thebaid* had to be accomplished by Jupiter's own lightning, then, is here discharged by a mere human.

Conclusion

In tracing a series of allusions over two epics—allusions which pertain to one of the main characters—the foregoing analysis suggests that a more global approach to the reception of the *Thebaid* is called for, one broader in scope and more deeply engaged with the poems' particular contexts. What such an approach might look like—and just how persistent Capaneus was in the tradition—can be further illustrated by the briefest of concluding glances at the third great vernacular epic of early modern Italy, Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, first published in full in 1581. Despite its historical subject matter, Tasso's fictionalized treatment of the First Crusade was heavily influenced by Ariosto's poem, including the incorporation of many aspects of Rodomonte into the figure of Argante, one of the three principal opponents of the crusaders.

Like Ariosto before him, Tasso reads through the work of his predecessors back to their sources, though the task of identifying source passages is made somewhat easier by Tasso's echoing of the language of the *Thebaid*, and a few critics have duly noted the connections between Argante and Statius' Capaneus.³³ Yet the Statian pedigree of Tasso's Argante is not the most striking use of Capaneus in the *Liberata*; for Tasso, unlike Boiardo and Ariosto, actually mentions Capaneus by name. Intriguingly, however, the name is not used in conjunction with a pagan hero, such as Argante, whose blasphemy might intuitively be associated with the impiety of Capaneus. Rather, it is a Christian figure, the Swiss knight Alcasto, who enjoys this dubious privilege: *Alcasto il terzo vien, qual presso a Tebe / già Capaneo, con minaccioso volto* ("Alcasto comes third with threatening visage, like Capaneus long before against Thebes," *GL* 1.63). The reason for the comparison can be better understood when one considers the contemporary significance of the Swiss in Tasso's day. By the late sixteenth century the Swiss Confederacy had long been one of the primary centers of Reformation theology, where such famous and controversial figures as Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin had developed and disseminated their ideas; by the time of the *Liberata*'s publication many of the cantons were already strongholds of Protestantism. From the perspective of Counter-Reformation

33 See Foltran (1992–1993), who nevertheless privileges Vergilian intertexts, and the references to the *Thebaid* in Maier (1982). Tasso may have been influenced by a contemporary translation of Statius' epic composed by his acquaintance Erasmo di Valvasone (cf. above, n. 22). A study of Statius' reception in Valvasone's *Angeleida* (1590)—a source for Milton's *Paradise Lost*—is a desideratum; for preliminaries see the indices of Borsetto (2005) s.v. *Theb* and *Papinio*.

Italy, then, the impiety of Capaneus supplies an apt analogue for the contemporary heresy of the Swiss, which is foreshadowed and embodied in the figure of Alcasto. Although Alcasto can hardly lay claim to Capaneus' martial prowess in his appearances through the poem, his heretical symbolism has a chilling afterlife in the contemporary Christian history at which the *Liberata* anxiously glances.

Thus, despite its long-dwindling stock in modernity, the *Thebaid* nevertheless exerted a considerable influence on the canonical literary tradition of Renaissance Italy. The figure of Capaneus, in particular, provided fertile ground for the poets' literary experimentation and cultural thought. From Boiardo to Tasso, Statius' Capaneus inspired the Italian epicists' representations of character and, within the historical context, the hero's antagonism to the divine thematized various intellectual and cultural tensions at the intersection of religion and humanism. In the light of his later reception, then, Statius' impious hero comes alive as part of a longstanding tradition of negotiating questions of authority, belief, and intellectual independence—a legacy that should encourage us to re-evaluate the place of the *Thebaid* in the epic tradition and in the cultural identity of imperial Rome and early modern Europe.³⁴

34 I am grateful to Ayelet Haimson Lushkov for reading and improving several drafts of this chapter.

Early Modern *Thebaid*: The Latin Commentary Tradition

Valéry Berlincourt

Statius' various poems received strikingly contrasting attention in early modern exegetical endeavors.¹ Following their rediscovery in 1417 and their belated diffusion among humanist circles, the *Silvae* were intensely discussed in the second half of the fifteenth century.² While Perotti's attempt (c. 1469–1470) remained unpublished, that of Calderini, a pioneer in spreading his commentaries in print, went to press as early as 1475—and prompted Poliziano's vigorous reaction.³ Widely distributed through *opera omnia* editions published from 1483 on, and later in 1600 by Lindenbrog⁴ and in 1618 by Cruceus, Calderini's work was crucial in shaping the exegetical tradition of this collection of poems. Another early contribution that reached a wide readership is Avanzi's list of emendations added to the *opera omnia* of 1499. The *Achilleid*, too, aroused interest: the commentary by Maturanzio [Matarazzi] was included in the edition of 1483, and Britannico had his own printed in 1485; both were gathered together in 1618. The *Thebaid*, on the other hand, did not attract any new exegesis in printed form until the final part of the sixteenth century.

The notes included in the rare and uninfluential *editio princeps* of Statius' epics (published at Rome in 1470), which relate to only the first book of the *Thebaid* (and the *Achilleid*), are medieval.⁵ The commentary that spread in print in the fifteenth century is the late-antique work commonly attributed to

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- 1 As yet, we still lack a comprehensive study of humanist (handwritten and printed) commentaries on Statius, but Anderson (2009) 1.xxxvii announces a forthcoming article in the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*; cf. Clogan (1995). For an overview of the reception of Statius in the age of printing, see the epilogue in Anderson (2009) 3.123–9. The materials discussed here are developed in Berlincourt (2013a). Part of them was presented in an earlier form in my doctoral thesis (Berlincourt [2008c]); cf. Berlincourt (2006) for a brief survey.
 - 2 See Reeve (1977).
 - 3 G. Abbamonte is preparing an edition of Perotti's commentary; see also Abbamonte (1997). Poliziano's unpublished commentary has been edited in Cesarini Martinelli (1978).
 - 4 Some copies only actually contain Calderini's commentary.
 - 5 The text and the commentaries of the *princeps* are discussed in Anderson (2010).

“Lactantius Placidus,”⁶ which Italian humanism had preferred to the materials that had developed in the Middle Ages;⁷ it is this Servian-type exegesis, first printed in 1476, that was included in *opera omnia* editions from 1483 on.⁸ In addition to the existence of that work, a significant factor that may account for the absence of new printed commentaries on the *Thebaid*, despite its popularity in the medieval period, is its minor importance as a school text—as compared to the *Achilleid*, which was deeply rooted in early education.⁹ Moreover, the Theban poem lacks features that made the *Silvae* particularly appealing to Poliziano and Renaissance commentators in general: novelty, variety, and critical challenge. A text whose rough places had largely been smoothed thanks to its medieval diffusion was unattractive to the competitive context of humanist teaching, where reputations and careers were often built on reviving extremely difficult and corrupt texts.

The first original printed exegesis of the *Thebaid* may be termed indirect: the Italian notes published in 1570 by Cesare Pavesi (*alias* Pietro Targa) bear on Valvasone’s *volgarizzamento* rather than Statius’ poem. Starting from Bernartius (1595), however, sets of Latin notes developed into a tradition that remained especially dynamic until Beraldus (1685). This tradition represented the main contribution to Statius’ epic until the twentieth century, and its legacy is still felt today in scholarly works. In comparison, contemporaneous exegeses in modern languages related to translations—very short English notes by Stephens (1648),¹⁰ then French notes, combined with minimal Latin annotations by Guyet and by Peyrarède, in the complex book published by Marolles (1658)—had much less to contribute, though they prove interesting in some regards. In later periods, a few sets of notes are worthy of notice, in particular

6 See Kaufmann, pp. 491–4 in this volume. On the problematic attribution, see Brugnoli (1988).

7 The best known of these is the “*in principio* commentary,” first identified and discussed in D. Anderson (1988) 226–34; (1994). See also de Angelis (1997); H. Anderson (2009) 1.xxv–xxvi.

8 By contrast, the commentary on the *Achilleid* attributed to “Lactantius Placidus,” a medieval work as it turns out, did not enjoy wide circulation and was not published until Lindenbrog (1600).

9 Black (2001) shows the contrasting fortunes of the *Achilleid* and *Thebaid* in Italian school manuscripts.

10 On Stephens’ translation, see Newlands, pp. 601–5 and Braund, pp. 581–3, 591–2, 595–6 in this volume.

that of Lewis (1767);¹¹ the *Thebaid*, however, received no attention comparable to Markland's accomplishment about the *Silvae* (1728).¹²

The present chapter aims at giving a glimpse of what lies behind the names of those who commented in Latin upon the *Thebaid* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and at showing something of their significance as instances of reception. Many readers of Statius know of them mainly through mentions and quotations (often abridged and cut from their original contexts, unavoidably) in recent commentaries or editions. Sometimes they do not even know their names, since, in some of these recent works, explanations and interpretations are attributed to the nineteenth-century compilers Valpy or Amar and Lemaire, rather than to the original early modern commentaries. An overview of the exegeses of the *Thebaid* published between the sixteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries—including those in modern languages—is provided in the appendix at the end of this chapter; I analyze them more broadly from the perspectives of reception and erudite discourse, and discuss their bio-bibliographical and intellectual contexts, elsewhere.¹³

Latin Commentaries: Bernartius (1595) to Beralduus (1685)

Latin commentaries on the *Thebaid* produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries responded in various ways to Statius' poem (as will be seen in the next two sections), but also to their own location within exegetical history. This genre had undergone significant changes since the pioneering works on the *Silvae* and the *Achilleid*. In the last decades of the fifteenth century the full-scale, all-embracing commentary had been supplanted by works focusing on more specific (notably critical) issues and by discussions tackling passages of several works in a free order, for which Poliziano's *Miscellanea*, after Gellius, provided an inspiring model.¹⁴ Most commentaries on Statius' epic are comprised of scattered notes, brief or extensive (Bernartius, Barclay, Cruceus, Gronovius). Two full-scale commentaries are found, one huge and protean

11 On Lewis' translation, see Braund, pp. 584–5, 594–6 in this volume.

12 On Markland's significance for the *Silvae*, see Liberman (2010) 19–21; cf. Hall *et al.* (2008) 3.69 on Markland's plans with respect to the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*.

13 Berlincourt (2013a).

14 On the temporary decline of the full-scale commentary, see, e.g., Grafton (1983) 1.9–44. On the connections between commentary, *uariae lectiones*, and *miscellanea*, see notably Mouren (2001); Mandosio (2003); Blair (2006).

(Barth), the other much more conventional (Beraldus).¹⁵ The following overview will disclose diverging attitudes towards the *Thebaid* and Statius' other works respectively. A noticeable trend, especially during the initial phase, is a greater interest in the *Silvae*, as exegesis of this collection of poems was boosted by the blossoming genre of the *sylua* and by the contemporaneous appeal of occasional poetry; scholars like Morellus and Gevartius neglected the *Thebaid* altogether.¹⁶

Bernartius was one of those many figures who combined involvement in public life—as a lawyer, in his case—and participation in scholarly debates about the classics. His commentary on the epics published in 1595 together with a few notes on the *Silvae*—the proper commentary on the latter work was delayed to 1599 for lack of a manuscript—was elaborated in close relation with Lipsius; it enjoyed the benefit of his advice and help, and shows strong connections with his works. Bernartius' endeavors with Statius matched the taste of Lipsius and his circle for the literature of the early empire. They are also part of a broader interest in Statius in the Netherlands, in which the *Silvae* played a leading role, notably through the influence of Joseph Scaliger—whose father Julius Caesar gave the epics preferences over the *Silvae*.¹⁷

In 1601, while still studying in France long before gaining literary fame as a polemicist and satirist, the Scotsman John Barclay produced a work that reacted to Bernartius' and would be used in its turn by the later tradition. A characteristic example of those early attempts that so many ambitious young men published on the threshold of their careers, it is composed of a commentary on the first four books and a mere sample of notes on the next four, and leaves out books nine to twelve altogether; Barclay declared that he had to break off at the command of his father William. Among those who commented upon Statius in the seventeenth century, Barclay is the only one who dealt exclusively with the *Thebaid*, though it must be remembered that he was the author of a collection of poems entitled *Sylvae* (1606).

A complex figure, celebrated in other circles as a pioneer in irenic political thought (*Le nouveau Cynée*, 1623), the Frenchman Cruceus is now known to Statian scholars almost only for his edition of the *opera omnia* and his commentary on the *Silvae*, published in 1618, and for two polemics about the latter collection of poems—first against Gevartius, who defended his previous commentary (1616) from Cruceus' criticism in his *Electa* (1619), then

15 The important and influential *observationes* included in Lindenbrog (1600) are almost exclusively critical, not exegetical: see the brief presentation in Hall *et al.* (2008) 3.59–60.

16 Morellus commented on the *Silvae* (1601 and 1602, partial commentaries from 1596 on) and the *Achilleid* (1601), Gevartius on the *Silvae* only (1616).

17 On the diffusion of Statius' *Silvae* in the Netherlands, see van Dam (1996) and (2008).

against Gronovius, whose *Diatribes* on the *Silvae* (1637) prompted reactions and counter-reactions.¹⁸ In spite of a few traces in recent editions, Cruceus' contribution to the epics has vanished from the minds of Statian scholars almost entirely;¹⁹ it was published in 1620 in a volume that also includes a section on the *Silvae*.²⁰

In the same years as he was involved in the controversy with Cruceus about the *Silvae*, Gronovius seized the opportunity presented by his travels throughout the Continent to gather materials relevant to the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*; but he delayed for years his projects in this regard, and the outcome, much less ambitious than the *Diatribes* on the *Silvae*, did not make the most of his preparatory materials. A hasty work commissioned by Elzevier, the edition that Gronovius published in 1653 along with a "sample" on both epics and additional notes on the *Silvae* tackles only about two hundred passages in the *Thebaid*. However, the outstanding insight of his critical discussions, combined with his high reputation and the good editorial fortune of his book (on which more below), ensured that he remained a universally respected commentator of the poem in the next centuries.²¹

Highly prolific both as a commentator and as a neo-Latin poet, Barth (†1658) composed by far the most comprehensive discussion of Statius' works, published in 1664–1665. His interests were oriented primarily towards the *Thebaid*, as shown in particular by the greater detail of his exegesis of this poem (little short of *three thousand* in-quarto pages). Except for superficial revision, Barth finished his work long before the publication of Gronovius' notes on the epics; on the other hand, the correspondence reveals that his silence concerning Gronovius' *Diatribes* on the *Silvae* (1637) resulted from a decision motivated by hostile feelings. Rediscovering Barth, a rewarding task in itself,²² requires overcoming prejudice; in his *Statius*, the German scholar neither invented the manuscript readings he quoted, nor tried to sell as *scholia* his own explanations and interpretations. The authenticity of the readings he quotes has long been proven by their connection with well-known extant manuscripts;²³ in addition, many of those hitherto unattested elsewhere have been found in

18 Cruceus' *Frondatio sive Antidiatribe* (1639); Gronovius' *Elenchus* (1640); Cruceus' *Muscarium sive Helelenchus* (1640).

19 On this process, see Berlincourt (2008a) 312–19.

20 To the best of my knowledge, Liberman (2010) is the only recent scholar of the *Silvae* to mention this book.

21 Berlincourt (2008b).

22 Wolff (2006) 59.

23 Klotz (1904).

manuscripts collated recently,²⁴ and others will emerge from further study.²⁵ Barth is explicit that what he calls “*uetera scholia*” represents a generic category for materials drawn from preparatory notes;²⁶ the assertion that he uses it for fear of ascribing to himself other people’s findings may arouse suspicion, but it makes clear that the term is not meant to refer specifically to *scholia* in the sense we mean.²⁷ Not only present-day scholars, but also many contemporary scholars, have been annoyed by the fact that Barth’s notes are prolix, often tangential to the text, and sometimes muddled. However, such striking features deserve to be seen in a broader context. The globalizing trend had some justification at a time when commentaries could still claim an important role in the production and transmission of knowledge, in relationship with other erudite discourses and with specific reading strategies; Barth’s commentary also shows points of contact with the expansion of discourses that claimed great freedom in content and composition, as mirroring the complex movements of a scholar’s mind. In any case, Barth’s commentary is a personal and deeply engaged response to Statius’ poem and, as such, a fascinating expression of its reception.

As much as the works mentioned up to this point, the *notae uariorum* published in 1671 in Leiden had an impact on later exegeses. Veenhusen made materials widely accessible, but his selection only partially reflected the significance of the respective contributions of his predecessors. As far as the *Thebaid* was concerned, he reproduced all the notes of Gronovius, a most esteemed figure in Dutch philology; but he retained only a small portion of Bernartius’ notes, and a much smaller portion of Barth’s.²⁸ Later generations often did without consulting the original commentaries, and repeated Veenhusen’s bias instead. The impact of his selected notes was revived at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when they were reprinted by Valpy (1824, endnotes) and then partly assimilated in the influential edition of Amar and Lemaire (1825–1830).

In 1685, Beraldu added Statius’ *opera omnia* to the pioneering collection *Ad Usum Delphini*, which was aimed at making the Latin classics more easily read in the original and at remedying the decline in language skills.²⁹ His two volumes

24 Innumerable instances are found in the apparatuses of Hall *et al.* (2007–2008) 1 and 3; cf. Hall *et al.* (2008) 3.67–8.

25 E.g., at 3.310–11 *cara . . . corde* (instead of *corde . . . cara*) is found in London, BL Reg.15.A.29.

26 Preface (“*Amico lectori*”) preceding the commentary on the *Thebaid*, vol. 2, p. 2.

27 Cf. Dill (2004) on the history of the term *scholion*.

28 Berlincourt (2008b) 6–9 and n. 24 discusses Veenhusen’s role as a filter in more detail.

29 On the collection *Ad Usum Delphini*, see Volpilhac-Auger (2000) and Furno (2005); on the *Statius*, see Delarue (2005).

gain importance from the fact that they offer the only running commentary on the whole poem except Barth's, and also a full Latin paraphrase (*interpretatio continua*). Subject to constraints of format and guided by pedagogical considerations, Beraldus' often derivative notes provide much less information than Barth's. However, they proved much more influential in the long term. They were not forced into the mold of *notae uariorum* and later enjoyed the same fortune as Veenhusen's selected notes, since they were reprinted in Valpy's edition (1824, under the Latin text with Beraldus' paraphrase), and then used in the notes elaborated by Amar and Lemaire (1825–1830).

Commenting on Statius? Centripetal and Centrifugal Responses

Early modern commentaries are varied and complex responses to the classical works they deal with. In addition to information of a critical, linguistic, literary, and factual kind essentially centered on the text, they often construct and transmit a broader knowledge relevant to these fields; they may also include other elements such as edifying remarks, whose connection to the text ranges from close to very loose. Moreover, they may turn their attention to works other than that commented upon; Barth, in particular, has long discussions of authors such as Lucretius and Martianus Capella.³⁰

Textual criticism takes up much space in the Latin exegetical tradition of the *Thebaid*.³¹ The aim was not then, as it is now, to establish the "original" text with reference to a reconstruction of the manuscript transmission based on *recensio*; rather, one strove to improve a printed vulgate text, with limited other resources at best. Bernartius, who corrects a few passages in the Aldine text, documents with a precision unusual in his day the readings he quotes from his sources—an attitude that he shares with other members of Lipsius' circle.³² Gronovius' notes, nearly all centered on textual issues and generally brilliant, are the most universally recognized contribution of the seventeenth century to the text of the *Thebaid*. More controversial (often unjustly so, as stated above), Barth's interventions are uneven, but they tackle infinitely larger portions of Statius' text. Predictably, those lacking direct access to manuscript

30 On discussions of this kind, see Berlincourt (2013b) 282–6; cf. Berlincourt (2013a), index rerum s.v. "*collatérales*," *discussions*.

31 See Berlincourt (2013a) 215–89. Hall *et al.* (2008) 3.58–68 survey the textual criticism of most of the scholars discussed here. I am preparing a book dedicated to the history of the printed text of the *Thebaid*.

32 Battezzato (2006) analyzes in detail the case of Livineius.

materials, above all Barclay and Beraldus, have much less to say; a few conjectures by Cruceus deserve to be recorded nonetheless.³³ Some critical discussions attest a great feeling for the peculiarities of Statius' style, such as the unusual meaning or use of some words (Barth *ad* 3.30 *nescius*), the ellipsis of the copula in passive or deponent forms of the perfect tenses (Gronovius *ad* 3.564, who corrects *scrutamur* to *scrutati*), or the repetition of the same word in close proximity. For example, Barth suggests a correction that would *create* such a repetition:

Tantique maris.] [...] In optimis tamen membranis aperte scriptum est *tacitique maris*. Quod non ausim damnare, licet eadem uox praecedenti insit. Solet enim sic Papinius [...].³⁴

BARTH *AD THEB.* 8.268

Tantique maris ["the huge sea"].] [...] In the best manuscript, however, is clearly written *tacitique maris* ["the silent sea"]. I would not dare to find fault with it, although the same word is present in what precedes. For Statius is accustomed to do this [...].³⁵

Together with textual criticism, clarification of the literal meaning is the main reason why present-day philological works still quote early modern commentaries—whether to agree with their findings, to contrast them with other views, or to ridicule them. Barth and Beraldus throw light on a considerable number of tricky passages, the former often through "*uetera scholia*," the latter as much in his Latin paraphrase as in his notes. This task is given room, too, in the scattered observations of Bernartius, Barclay, and Cruceus—and, in connection with textual criticism, of Gronovius. The passages discussed allow us a glimpse of those characteristics that potentially hindered the literal understanding of Statius' poetry: for instance, syntactic constructions felt to be uncommon (Barclay *ad* 3.438 [*reuelli... times*]), condensed expressions and ideas (Beraldus *ad* 3.160 [*mihi quippe malorum causa labor*]; Gronovius *ad* 3.211 [*quanti crudele rubebitis amnes*], where clarification is combined with textual correction), and periphrases (Bernartius *ad* 3.180 [*Sidonius... hospes: "Cadmus"*]).

The format of a lemmatized commentary favors the production and transmission of linguistic and stylistic knowledge. More than anywhere else, this is obvious in Barth's notes, for instance, in long lists of verbs with prefixes or of

33 These conjectures are discussed in Berlincourt (2011).

34 Cf. 8.253 *tacito... uoto* and 8.268 (!) *conticuit*.

35 All translations from early modern commentaries are my own.

oxymora expressly pointed out as typical of Statius (*ad* 3.406 [*adstupet*], *ad* 10.240 [234]³⁶ [*pulchra . . . seditione*]). In books that were aimed at people who not only read but also wrote Latin—and whose authors, in some cases, also composed literary works in that language—such considerations often entailed a prescriptive dimension. Normative judgments abound in Barth from the beginning of his notes on the *Thebaid*, where we find reproaches against excessive sophistication, stretched meanings of words, and precedence given to diction over reason (notably *ad* 1.3 *Pierius calor*, *ad* 1.5 *inexorabile pactum*, *ad* 1.7 *Martis operi agricolam*, *ad* 1.10 *Tyrios montes*)—though on the whole Barth's opinion is more favorable and often includes high praise. From the perspective of Statius' reception, another striking feature is Bernartius' proclivity to point out "archaic" linguistic usage, which mirrors an interest in "non-classical" texts strong in Lipsius' circle, and refers to a category instrumental in promoting a broad use of the resources of the Latin language.

Remarks on poetics bear primarily on *elocutio*, and also on *inuentio*, seldom on *dispositio*. The commentators' attention is directed much less towards interpretation, or even structure and narration, than towards comparison with other texts. They contrast Statius' treatment of myth with other versions, with the purpose of analyzing his creative work, but also of gathering materials as a handbook would do. At the level of detail, the perspective of *imitatio*–*aemulatio* is predominant. Barth's dense notes, in particular, are very much concerned with comparing Statius' expressions, images, and similes to their equivalents in the epic tradition and beyond; they give much less consideration to the interpretation of such findings. Here again, judgment is often present. The *Aeneid* takes pride of place as a point of reference everywhere, and especially, of course, in connection with those extradiegetical utterances that embed Vergil's epic into the Flavian poem: the apostrophe to Hopleus and Dymas (*Theb.* 10.445–8) and the sphragis (12.810–19). Barth, above all, dwells on the subject of literary hierarchies with regard to the final lines of the *Thebaid*. The same passage shows his interest in literary reception and his eagerness to signal "Statian imitations" in medieval literature, of which he had a knowledge quite unusual in his day (notably *ad* 12.816 [815] *nec tu diuinam Aeneida tempta* [Stephen of Tournai], *ad* 12.818 [Amadeus of Lausanne], *ad* 12.819 [Gerald of Wales]).

Commentators often deal with customs and other elements of the real world reflected in Statius' Theban epic. While Barclay and Beraldus generally have a clear focus and a narrow scope, other commentators provide, at least from time to time, extensive discussions that surpass by far the requirements

36 Line count in many early editions differs from ours, resulting from the absence of our lines 10.100–5.

of explanation and interpretation. Bernartius mingles observations on the *bullae* (“knobs”) of a baldric mentioned in the poem with a long development about the *bullae* (“lockets”) that children wore around their necks (*ad* 6.77). Lingering over Amphiaraus’ oracle, Barth mentions dietary restrictions, describes the cult site, and leans on authorities ranging from Herodotus, pseudo-Dicaearchus, and Plutarch to Tertullian and Solinus (*ad* 1.399). Such notes remind us that in the early modern period the reconstitution of ancient *realia* was essentially based on texts rather than on archaeological remains. In addition, knowledge of the past could be felt as being directly relevant for the present, notably when it came to the art of war. The utilitarian notion of such knowledge—central in Lipsius’ thought—is obvious in Bernartius, but also in Cruceus and Barth.

Addressing another form of contemporary relevance, some commentators more or less explicitly draw from the *Thebaid* edifying, and in particular moral, lessons. To a certain extent, they respond to the peculiarities of this text. Bernartius uses for this purpose Statius’ sententious style in an approach that is closely connected with that of commonplace books in several respects, and he is also careful to identify as maxims (*gnomai*) the relevant utterances, while Barth often signals this characteristic of the Flavian poet only indirectly by referring his reader to printed collections of such maxims; when Creon tells Menoeceus that “impetuousness serves all things badly”³⁷ (*male cuncta ministrat / impetus*, 10.704–5), both attitudes are clearly illustrated (Bernartius *ad* 10.704 [699]; Barth *ad* 10.704 [698]). At least in Barth’s work, edification also finds a different and significant expression with regard to the actions (and beliefs) represented in the poem. The German commentator reacts to the horrors of the Theban conflict by recalling atrocious acts committed in the “barbarous” Middle Ages or in the European wars of his own time. It must be stressed, however, that the lessons Barth gives his reader—like any information provided by his commentary—do not always respond directly to the contents of Statius’ text, but can also appear in more or less unexpected places, as developments in digressive notes.

Full-scale Commentaries: A Reading of the Duel

Barth’s and Beraldus’ commentaries offer an excellent opportunity to have a closer look at how exegetical discourses respond to the *Thebaid*, taking as an example the brothers’ duel and the extradiegetic apostrophe that follows

37 Translations of the *Thebaid* are by A. L. Ritchie, J. B. Hall, and M. J. Edwards in Hall *et al.* (2007) 2, unless otherwise stated.

(11.497–579)—a passage where they provide one hundred and twenty-four notes and twenty-six notes respectively, while Cruceus and Gronovius have just two, Bernartius only one.³⁸

From the early stages of the duel (11.497–551), Beraldu takes care to clarify the sequence of events and, where he thinks it necessary, to identify which brother is acting at each moment: at 11.499 the “impious king” is Eteocles, at 11.516 it is Eteocles who thinks that the blood on the ground is his own, at 11.546 the subject of *aeger anhelat* (“breathes heavily”) is—so Beraldu believes—Polynices. Much room is given to elucidation of the literal meaning and to textual criticism.³⁹ Shrewder than Beraldu, Barth feels that at 11.546 the character concerned must be Eteocles, not Polynices. A potential objection is that Polynices himself is designated in the note of “Lactantius Placidus” as printed in early modern editions.⁴⁰ Barth, however, is aware that displacements have affected the transmission of some *scholia*;⁴¹ anticipating our editions—which do not record his precedence—he asserts that the utterance about Polynices has been connected with the wrong lemma and should be taken, rather, with the following line.⁴² Barth discusses both lines together in his effort to establish which character “taunts” (*increpat*) the other at 11.547; he corrects the latter sentence in order to make “the enemy” Polynices the subject instead of the object (*hostis* instead of *hostem*), starting from the explanation in a “*uetus scholion*” and leaning, too, on a gloss from a manuscript. Gronovius’ only note on the early stages of the duel is dedicated precisely to this critical problem and results in the same correction as Barth’s, while Beraldu reports Nicolaus Heinsius’ different solution.⁴³

Language and style are discussed throughout, sometimes in a highly judgmental manner. Beraldu conveys some lexical information through rephrasing and parallels (*ad* 11.523), in what turns out to be a mere repetition of Barth’s note (reprinted by Veenhusen). Barth censures verbal repetition (*ad* 11.503), signals a hyperbole (*ad* 11.526), and declares an oxymoron typically Statian,

38 We have seen that Barclay does not comment on books 9–12.

39 Bernartius’ only note addresses another textual point: at 11.543 it briefly emends *quam* in *qua*.

40 E.g., in Lindenbrog (1600): “MAGIS AC MAGIS AEGER. Polynices scilicet uiso fratris uulnere imminebat” (“WEAKER AND WEAKER. That is, Polynices, seeing his brother’s wound, pressed closely upon him”).

41 See Jakobi (1992) for a list of such displacements. Cf. Kaufmann, pp. pp. 491–6 in this volume.

42 Compare Sweeney (1997) and the apparatus in Jahnke (1898) *ad loc.*

43 Heinsius (*ad Ov. Her.* 2.74) reads *hostes* (with *gradus*: “hostile steps”); this reading is not mentioned in the editions of Hill (1996a) and of Hall *et al.* (2007–2008).

quoting further examples from the *Thebaid* (*ad* 11.541); he pays attention to semantic nuance (*ad* 11.549).

The German commentator tackles the problem of verisimilitude: he reproaches Statius for having Polynices deliver a speech (*ad* 11.504) or utter a *sententia* (*ad* 11.551) in the midst of the fighting. On the other hand, both commentators prove receptive to the theatrical dimension of the duel from the outset:⁴⁴ Beraldus explains *uersae . . . cohortes* (11.498) as “[the armies] turned towards this fight, as towards a spectacle,”⁴⁵ and he takes *turbatis gressibus* (11.519) as meaning “the steps are merged and entangled, so that the spectators cannot tell to whom they belong”;⁴⁶ Barth already puts forward the notion of spectacle in relation to *arma placent* (“battle is what they want,” 11.498), and then makes the connection between *uersae . . . cohortes* and the spectacular setting that Turnus imagined for his duel against Aeneas (Verg. *Aen.* 12.15). He also shows his interest in characterization, insisting that Polynices’ crime is “more justified” than his brother’s (*ad* 11.541).

Comparison with other texts is present at all levels. Beraldus draws attention (*ad* 11.545) to the similarity between Eteocles crouching behind his shield and Aeneas protecting himself from Messapus’ blow (Verg. *Aen.* 12.491–2). From a broader perspective, Barth remarks (*ad* 11.539) that Statius, by having Eteocles fall first, inverts Euripides’ *Phoenissae*; he does not interpret the difference, but suggests that the Flavian poet borrows from Antimachus. On another level, he contrasts (*ad* 11.500) the whole episode with the Iberian brothers who fight for their father’s throne in the *Punica*’s funeral games (Sil. 16.533–48), reproaching Silius for lacking style and talent, but acknowledging that he wrote good Latin and was immune to excessive affectedness; he also stresses that Silius enters the realm of fiction by modeling his episode on Statius’ duel and diverging from Livy. Passing judgment again when the poet compares the entangled brothers to a shipwreck, he states (*ad* 11.522) that the best description ever of a sea-storm is that of Ovid relating Ceyx’s death (*Met.* 11.474–572).

The duel offers some opportunities to deal with *realia*. To take just one example, Statius’ description of the precise spot hit by Polynices (11.543) allows

44 Beraldus and Barth, however, do not stress this dimension later (11.537–8, cf. 11.533 in a simile).

45 Recent translators understand *uersae* differently: Shackleton Bailey (2003), “the troops are changed . . .”; Ritchie, Hall, and Edwards (Hall *et al.* [2007] 2), “the armies, changed yet again. . .”

46 Compare Shackleton Bailey (2003), “steps are confused and both come crashing to the ground”; Ritchie, Hall, and Edwards (Hall *et al.* [2007] 2), “the horses’ hooves become entangled, and both men hurtle to the ground.”

Barth some observations on armor, together with discussions of the word *plumae*; while Servius and Tiberius Claudius Donatus lead him to give considerable space to ancient exegeses of Vergil, precise references to Turnebus and especially to Lipsius' *De Militia Romana* invite his readers to look at Statius through the lens of the art of war, ancient and modern. In the following line, Cruceus adopts, instead, a naturalistic approach in order to explain the sense of cold that Eteocles feels when hit by the sword (*ad* 11.544 ["p.493"]): iron is said to be cold because smiths harden forged artifacts by plunging them into cold water.

Barth's moral response is not limited to the judgment on the brothers. In a strikingly personal touch, the very first line in the initial stage of the duel, which mentions the goads that inflame their rage (11.497), evokes in his mind an "old Christian painting" in his possession. Beraldus' note is more focused on the text, but no less edifying, when Polynices says he is ready to expiate his crime should he succeed in killing his brother (11.506); it takes on the form of an exclamation against the deadly consequences of mad ambition and lust for revenge. In spite of appearances, however, this note cannot really be compared with Barth's as a witness to the reception of the *Thebaid*: there is nothing truly personal in it, as will be seen below.

Let us examine what Beraldus has to say about the final stage of the duel and the poet's apostrophe (11.552–79). When Eteocles falls down on purpose in order to deceive his brother (11.554), the French commentator condemns him through a quotation from Publilius Syrus: *boni est uiri etiam in morte nullum fallere* ("it is the mark of a good man to deceive no one even as he dies," *Sent.* B 41). He considers it useful to make clear that the cry heard at this point (11.555) comes from the spectators. Beraldus then devotes a longer note to the words *huc aliquis propere sceptrum atque insigne comarum, / dum uidet* ("here, someone, quick—the scepter and the badge on his head while he still sees!",⁴⁷ 11.559–60), which Polynices utters when he sees his brother on the ground:

Aposiopesis. Supprimatur enim uerbum, *Afferat*, aut aliud simile. Verba sunt Polynicis fratri morienti insultantis. Huc aliquis mihi protinus afferat sceptrum & diadema, quod Noster uocat *insigne comarum*, ut frater, dum exiguum adhuc ei uitae superest, aspiciat me regni Thebani insignia gestantem; eoque dolore moriens torqueatur. Haec enim fuit summa uotorum ipsius, quae supra expressit his uerbis. [11.505–8].

BERALDUS AD THEB. 11.559

47 Translation by Shackleton Bailey (2003).

Aposiopesis. For the verb “let...bring,” or some similar verb, is suppressed. These are the words of Polynices scoffing at his dying brother. Let someone bring me immediately the scepter and the diadem, which our poet terms “hair ornament,” so that my brother may look at me wearing the ornaments of the Theban kingdom, while there still is a small part of life left to him; and so that he may be tormented by grief when he dies. For such was the culmination of his own wishes, which he expressed above with the following words. [11.505–8].

Identification and explanation of the figure (actually an ellipsis), naming of the speaker and mention of his speech act, large-scale rephrasing, and a cross-reference to Polynices’ vow expressed earlier in Statius’ narrative: all of these strategies are in line with Beraldus’ usual practice. Contents and wording, however, are not his. He draws them almost entirely from his little-known predecessor Cruceus (*ad* 11.559 [“p.496”]).⁴⁸ On the other hand, Beraldus does not repeat here the final part of Cruceus’ note, containing an edifying exclamation concerned with the quotation of lines 11.505–8. The simple reason for this is that he has transferred that exclamation to his own note on line 11.506 where Polynices expresses his readiness to expiate his crime. Therefore, what we have to deal with in Beraldus’ note on that line (see above) is not an expression of his reaction to Statius’ text; rather, it is an illustration of his skills in recycling the exegetical tradition, and, more specifically, in putting together a running commentary through rearranging materials found in a set of scattered notes.

Beraldus’ next three notes are concerned with textual criticism. Without mentioning his source, he draws from Barth (quoted by Veenhusen) the discussion of an additional line found in a manuscript (facing 11.560);⁴⁹ he signals a variant reading (*ultricem* instead of *ultrices*, 11.563); with regard to the vexed line describing the fatal blow Eteocles deals his brother (11.567),⁵⁰ he explicitly repeats a rather long note of Gronovius, cutting off some of its palaeographic considerations.⁵¹ In one of the brief clarifications that follow (*ad* 11.569), he drastically abridges a discussion by Barth (quoted by Veenhusen), again

48 Apart from the inversion “aspiciat me” (instead of Cruceus’ “me aspiciat”), the only changes are “sceptrum & diadema, quod Noster uocat *insigne comarum*” (instead of Cruceus’ “sceptrum & coronam”)—where the commentator’s voice clashes with that of the intradiegetical character—and the addition of “eoque dolore moriens torqueatur,” which stresses the horror of Polynices’ vow.

49 The additional line is quoted in Hall *et al.* (2008) 3.684.

50 The primary and secondary apparatuses in Hall *et al.* (2007–2008) 1 and 3 clearly show how much this line varies in the manuscripts.

51 In Gronovius’ 1653 edition, the note is erroneously referred to line 11.467.

without acknowledging his debt. He also adds elements of his own, notably mythological information about Minos (*ad* 11.571). Finally, the concluding words of Statius' apostrophe, *solī memorent haec praelia reges* ("let... only kings recall to mind this battle," 11.579), inspire Beraldus to offer a short explanation that clarifies their meaning:

Ut caueant, ne in similes incident contentiones, quarum tam infaustus solet esse exitus.

BERALDUS AD THEB. 11.579

In order that they take care not to fall into similar disputes, the outcome of which is usually so unfortunate.

Barth's discourse on the same passages is much more dense, but also quite different in some ways. Admittedly, he too gives ample room to elucidation of the literal meaning; the important role that the "*uetera scholia*" play in this regard finds a good illustration in connection with the description of Eteocles' blow (11.564–7). Barth's interest in textual criticism is best seen here in the fact that he tackles an ellipsis (11.559, quoted above), from this angle, with the help of manuscripts. A quick survey is enough to show the broad range and the significance of his response to Statius' epic. In the first part of his note on the cry following Eteocles' collapse (11.555), Barth identifies this incident as a rewriting of the duel between Aeneas and Turnus and reasserts Vergil's superiority with reference to the sphragis:⁵²

Ex illo Maroniano, lib.XII. *Cadente pariter Turno*. Sed Maronianorum tanta maiestas & gratia est, ut admirari nemo satis possit. Nec umbram eorum, diuinorum prorsus, uersuum, assequitur Papinius: [*Aen.* 12.926–9]. [...] *Gemitus Rutulorum* tantus est, cum tanto dolore imis uisceribus eductus, ut ipsa corpora eleuet. *Remugiens mons*, cui non tumultu acuto aures feriat, modo ullum iis insit acetum? *uocem late alta* & spatium & sonitum habent. Non intellexit artificium hoc Papinius, uel sapientius contempsit quam aemulari uoluit. Unum illud: *Consurgunt gemitu Rutuli*. Ipsiū montis erectione crassius aemulari uoluit quam expectabatur. Bene ergo quod in fine Operis *Vestigia se Aeneidos diuina adorare*, non suum ei Poema componere edicit. [...]

BARTH AD THEB. 11.555

52 Barth considers that Statius rewrites not only the account of the Vergilian duel, but also its anticipation by Turnus (*Aen.* 12.15), as we have seen above, p. 554.

From that passage in Vergil in the twelfth book, *where Turnus collapses in the same way*. But the majesty and the charm of the Vergilian lines are so great, that nobody can admire them enough. And Statius cannot achieve even a pale reflection of these quite divine lines: [*Aen.* 12.926–9]. [...] “The Rutulians’ groan” is so loud, and is uttered from their innermost parts with such grief, that it raises the bodies themselves. Whose ears would <the words> “the echoing mount” not hit with violent uproar, providing only that they have any sharpness? <The words> “voice . . . widely . . . high” are both ample and high sounding. Statius did not understand this piece of skill, or else he showed more wisdom in avoiding it rather than attempting to emulate it. This one phrase, “the Rutulians rise up with a groan,” he wanted to emulate with the rising of the mount itself in a more obscure manner than was expected. He was therefore right to declare at the end of his work that “he worships the divine footsteps of the *Aeneid*,” and not that he compares his own poem with her. [...]

The rest of the note carries on in a more digressive way, since it deals with Vergil’s awareness of the quality of his work, relying on Macrobius’ *Saturnalia* (1.24) and on a metatextual reading of an utterance in the apostrophe to Lausus (Verg. *Aen.* 10.792).

Polynices’ last speech and Statius’ concluding words give Barth the opportunity to transmit knowledge, but also to display an intellectual and moral posture. He recalls (*ad* 11.569) the belief in infernal punishments, and then dwells (*ad* 11.571) on the subject of their denial, with references to Juvenal (2.149–52), Callimachus (*Epigr.* 13.3–4), Seneca (*Marc.* 19.4), and Cicero (*Nat. D.* 2.5, *Tusc.* 1.16.36–7), and mentions of Vergil, Lucretius with “all the Epicureans,” and “Lucian above all”; in shorter discussions of these punishments (*ad* 11.574, 11.575, and 11.576) he refers to Claudian’s *In Rufinum*, to Passerat’s notes on Propertius, and also to Seneca on the “very well-known” subject of the Furies. The notes thus appear as a showcase for readings and tastes, a place for celebrating fellow scholars and dismissing subjects unworthy of the attention of the commentator and his intended readers.

Barth’s involvement reaches a climax in his strongly moral reaction to the final line of Statius’ apostrophe (11.579, quoted above). Stressing that this line is directed at “the furious desire to rule, be it according to or against divine law,” he compares the passage of the *Punica* modeled on this one (Sil. 16.533–4 in particular), and observes the extreme frequency of similar utterances by way of examples and warnings. He says that Statius seizes every occasion to curse dire ambition, and then quotes Pothinus’ justification of absolute power in Lucan (8.489–90), recalling that the author of the *De Bello Civili* died as a victim of tyranny. Above all, he asserts that in his own wretched days, the ambition of

a single man—read: Ferdinand II, the Holy Roman Emperor—has been devastating Germany for years. Though found only sporadically in his notes, such remarks most vividly show how Barth reads Statius against the background of the real world in which he lives.⁵³ They also illustrate with the utmost clarity the capacity of the *Thebaid* to gain contemporary relevance in the early modern period—and the capacity of commentaries to shed light on its reception.⁵⁴

Appendix: List of Modern Commentaries on the *Thebaid*

This list mentions only the first edition of each commentary; it does not include commentaries that bear only on a small portion of the poem. The name in brackets is that of the commentator. The letters L, and D, E, F, or I (or L*) indicate, respectively, that the book offers the Latin text of Statius, and a German, English, French, or Italian translation (or a full Latin paraphrase). Orthography has been standardized in most cases. For a faithful transcription of the book titles, as found in the original editions, see Berlincourt (2013a) 659–69.

Venice 1570 (Cesare Pavese [*alias* Pietro Targa]) [I]

La Thebaide di Statio ridotta dal Sig. Erasmo di Valvasone in ottava rima. In Venetia, appresso Francesco de' Franceschi Senese.

Antwerp 1595 (Johannes Bernartius [Jan Bernaerts]) [L]

P. Statii Papinii opera quae extant Ioh. Bernartius ad libros ueteres recensuit & scholiis illustravit. Antuerpiae, ex officina Plantiniana, apud uiduam, & Ioannem Moretum.

Pont-à-Mousson 1601 (Johannes Barclaius [John Barclay])

In P. Statii Papinii Thebaidis libros IIII. commentarii et in totidem sequentes notae, cum argumentis summam cuiusque libri seriem ac materiam explicantibus, auctore Ioanne Barclaio, Guil^{mi} I. C^{ti}. Filio. Pontimussi, apud Melchiorem Bernardum.

Paris 1620 (Emericus Cruceus [Eméric Crucé])

Emerici Crucei in I.<–XII.> Statii Thebaidos notae, <in I.–v. Achilleidos notae, in Statii Syluas succidanea>. Parisiis, apud Ludouicum Boulanger.

London 1648 (Thomas Stephens) [E]

An Essay upon Statius, or, The Five First Books of Publ. Papinius Statius his Thebais Done Into English Verse by T. S. with the Poetick History Illustrated. London, printed for Richard Royston.

53 I discuss this dimension of Barth's commentary in a forthcoming article.

54 I should like to express my deep gratitude to Michael Dewar and Damien Nelis, who were so kind as to read the manuscript of this chapter.

Amsterdam 1653 (Johannes Fredericus Gronovius [Johann Friedrich Gronow]) [L]

P. Papinii Statii opera ex recensione et cum notis I. Frederici Gronovii. Amsterodami, typis Ludouici Elzevirii.

Paris 1658 (Michel de Marolles, François Guyet, Jean de Peyrarède) [L F]

[vols 1–2:] *P. Statii Papinii Thebaidos libri duodecim cum notis Francisci Gueti Andini, Io. Peyraredi nob. Aquitani, & aliorum, opera ac studio Michaelis de Marolles, abbatis de Villeloin* = *La Thébaïde de Stace avec les remarques en Latin & en François.* / [vol. 3:] *Les Sylves et l'Achilléide de Stace avec des remarques en Latin & en François.* Lutetiae Parisiorum, apud Sebastianum Huré et Fridericum Leonardi = A Paris, chez Sebastien Huré et Frederic Leonard.

Zwickau 1664–1665 (Caspar Barthius [Caspar von Barth]) [L]

[frontispiece:] *P. Papinii Statii quae exstant ex recensione et cum animaduersionibus locupletis Casparis Barthii.* Cygnaeae, ex officina Göpneriana, apud Johannem Scheibium.—[typographic title:] *Publii Papinii Statii quae exstant Caspar Barthius recensuit & animaduersionibus locupletissimis illustravit, inspersis ad Thebaida & Achilleida commentariis ac glossis ueterum hactenus bonam partem ineditis, & scholiaste Lutatio multis locis corruptis castigato, ad auctoritatem & opem manuscriptorum exemplarium, praecipue unius alteriusque admirandae bonitatis.* Cygnaeae, ex officina Melchioris Göpneri, apud Johannem Scheibium.

Leiden 1671 (Johannes Veenhusen) [L]

Publii Papinii Statii Sylvarum lib. v, Thebaidos lib. XII, Achilleidos lib. II, notis selectissimis in Sylvarum libros Domitii, Morelli, Bernartii, Geuartii, Crucei, Barthii, Ioh. Frid. Gronovii Diatribe, in Thebaidos praeterea Placidi Lactantii, Bernartii, &c., quibus in Achilleidos accedunt Maturantii, Britannici, accuratissime illustrati a Iohanne Veenhusen. Lugd. Bata., ex officina Hackiana.

Paris 1685 (Claudius Beralduus [Claude Bérault]) [L L*]

Publii Papinii Statii opera interpretatione et notis illustravit Claudius Beralduus, iussu christianissimi Regis, ad usum serenissimi Delphini. Lutetiae Parisiorum, apud Lambertum Roulland.

Milan 1731–1732 (Filippo Argelati) [L I]

Corpus omnium ueterum poetarum Latinorum cum eorumdem Italica uersione = *Raccolta di tutti gli antichi poeti Latini co la loro versione nell'Italiana favella.* [vols 1–2:] *Tomus ... continet P.P. Statii Thebaidos ... libros ...* = *Tomo ... contiene li ... libri della Tebaide di Selvaggio Porpora* [Cornelio Bentivoglio d'Aragona]. / [vol. 3:] *... P.P. Statii Sylvarum libros v. ... li cinque libri delle Selve di P.P. Stazio tradotti da un pastor Arcade* [Francesco Maria Biacca]. / [vol. 4:] *... P.P. Statii Achilleidos libros v. ... li cinque libri dell'Achilleide di P.P. Stazio tradotti da un Accademico Quirino* [Orazio Bianchi]. Mediolani, in Regia curia = Milano, nel Regio Ducal palazzo.

Oxford 1767 (William Lillington Lewis) [E]

The Thebaid of Statius Translated into English Verse with Notes and Observations and a Dissertation upon the Whole by Way of Preface. Oxford, printed at the Clarendon-press.

Milan 1782–1788 [L I]

[vols 1–2:] *P. Papinii Statii Thebais cum appositis Italico carmine interpretationibus ac notis.* / [vol. 3:] ... *Sylvarum libri v.* ... / [vol. 4:] ... *Achilleidos libri v.* ... Mediolani, typis Imper. monast. S. Ambrosii Maioris. [Same translations as in Milan 1731–1732.]

Venice 1786 [L]

Publii Papinii Statii opera ex recensione Iohannis Veenhusen cum notis selectioribus. Venetiis, apud Thomas Bettinelli.

London 1824 (Abraham John Valpy) [L L*]

P. Papinii Statii opera omnia ex editione Bipontina, cum notis et interpretatione in usum Delphini, uariis lectionibus, notis uariorum, recensu editionum et codicum et indice locupletissimo, accurate recensita. Londini, curante et imprimente A.J. Valpy.

Paris 1825–1830 (Jean-Augustin Amar du Rivier and Nicolas Eloi Lemaire) [L]

[*P. Papinii Statii quae exstant omnia opera.*] [vol. 1:] *Libri quinque Silvarum P. Papinii Statii cum uarietate lectionum et selectis Marklandi aliorumque notis, quibus suas addiderunt J.A. Amar et N.E. Lemaire.* / [vols 2–3:] *Thebais P. Papinii Statii cum uarietate lectionum et selectis uariorum adnotationibus, quibus suas addiderunt ...* / [vol. 4:] *In opera P. Papinii Statii, cum testimoniis, recensu codicum et notitia litteraria, index uniuersus rerum, nominum et uocabulorum quem plane confecit et disposuit N.E. Lemaire.* Parisiis, colligebat Nicolaus Eligius Lemaire. [vol. 3 also contains the *Achilleid.*]

Paris 1829–1832 (Wilhelm Rinn, Nicolas Louis Achaintre, and Marc-Lucien Boutteville) [L F]

[vol. 1:] *Œuvres complètes de Stace traduites les livres I et II des Silves par M. Rinn, les livres III et IV par M. Achaintre.* / [vol. 2:] ... *le livre V des Silves et les livres I à IV de la Thébaïde traduits par M. Achaintre.* / [vols 3–4:] ... *traduction nouvelle ... par M.-L. Boutteville.* Paris, C.L.F. Panckoucke.

Frankfurt 1833 (Wilhelm Ernest Weber) [L]

Corpus poetarum Latinorum uno uolumine absolutum cum selecta uarietate lectionis et explicatione breuissima edidit Guilielmus Ernestus Weber. Francofurti ad Moenum, sumptibus et typis Henrici Ludouici Broenneri.

Paris 1835–1836 (Friedrich Dübner) [L]

Publii Papinii Statii opera quae exstant cum notis aliorum et suis edidit Fr. Dubner. Parisiis, excudit C.L.F. Panckoucke.

Paris 1842 (Désiré Nisard, Théodore Guiard, Edmond Arnould, Henri Wartel) [L F]

Stace, Martial, Manilius, Lucilius Junior, Rutilius, Gratius Faliscus, Némésianus et Calpurnius: Œuvres complètes avec la traduction en français, publiées sous la direction de M. Nisard. Paris, J.J. Dubochet et compagnie.

Statian *Recusatio*: Angelo Poliziano and John Dryden

Dustin Mengelkoch

In 1677, nine years into his tenure as poet laureate, John Dryden (1631–1700) laments that the Roman poet, Publius Papinius Statius, wants for “poize of judgment.”¹ And so begins what may be termed a twenty-year long *recusatio* of Statius’ poetry, culminating at the beginning of the Dedication to his famous translation of Vergil’s *Aeneid*, in 1697. During these years, Dryden derides Statius and his poetry numerous times not only to show his readers but also himself what characteristics the best poets and poetry have versus that of the lowliest poets and poetry. Yet Dryden is not the first poet-critic to find in Statius’ work an opportunity to reconsider the understanding of poetry in a specific time and place. Some two hundred years earlier, the Florentine humanist Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494) formulated and wrote his own *recusatio* in terms of Statius’ poetry.² Similar to Dryden in that he pairs Vergil with Statius, he nevertheless arrives at precisely the opposite conclusion. For Poliziano, Statius is just as valuable a poet as Vergil; in fact, he rivals him. Differences aside, both Dryden and Poliziano use Statius to rethink their own and their own eras’ conceptions of poetry. For Poliziano, Statius’ poetry provides evidence that his own privileging of remote learning and variety were not only key ingredients for a humanistic understanding of classical literature and culture but also for creating successful poets following Vergil, including himself.³ For Dryden the contrary is true: Statius’ poetry is a source of stress and anxiety about how to evaluate poetry in general and his own poetic legacy specifically.

Neither Poliziano nor Dryden define *recusatio* or call what they write about Statius and his poetry *recusatio*. In fact, the term itself receives little use from antiquity through the beginning of the twentieth century, when it begins to

1 Scott and Saintsbury (1882–1893) 5.118; the comment comes in Dryden’s “Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic License.”

2 There is little to no evidence at present that Dryden knew Poliziano’s work firsthand.

3 Mengelkoch (2010a) 96.

attract some attention.⁴ Since then scholars have used it as a convenient term to mean, generally, the rejection of writing epic poetry. The broad nature of this definition derives in large part from the beginning of the *Aetia* by the poet Callimachus, who advocates for shorter, refined poems rather than longer, heroic ones. Essentially, he lends value and authority to less significant genres of poetry by arguing for erudition, variety, and elaboration over length and heroism. Roman poets including Vergil, Ovid, Horace, and Propertius heed his advice, but do so by evading the composition of epic poetry, not rejecting it entirely. In large part, each poet excuses himself by emphasizing his unworthiness to compose such a poem.⁵

The assumption about subsequent poets, like Statius, was that they had no problems writing epic poems or obsequious panegyric. Recent scholarship, however, has shown *recusatio* to be as significant a part of Flavian poetry, and Statius' poetry particularly, as that of the poetry of Vergil, Ovid, Propertius, and Horace.⁶ The difference that scholars now notice is that both the use and the type of *recusatio* changed significantly during the Flavian era. From the Callimachean rejection of epic poetry in favor of shorter, elaborate poems, Flavian poets reject elaborate, shorter poems in favor of epic themes contained in smaller forms, such as epigrams.⁷ This shift bears significant fruit not only in terms of Statius' poetry but also in the reception of his poetry, with which I am concerned here.

Poliziano and Dryden may not define *recusatio* literally; however, the ways that each receives and uses Statius' body of poetry, not necessarily how each notices that Statius himself participates in composing *recusationes*, is best thought of in *recusatio*-like terms. Since the nature of Statius' poems both mediates and exacerbates the tension between epic and non-epic forms of poetry, each poet-critic reacts according to his specific critical context. In other words, for Poliziano, Statius' use of variety and erudition (especially in the *Silvae*) champions a mutable sense of poetics that may be used to instruct. For Dryden, the very same characteristics highlight a lack of judgment about how to use recondite learning for instructing subsequent generations in how to compose heroic poetry. Here, then, is the crux: pedagogy. For both poet-critics, *recusatio* is most instructive in Statian terms or with respect to Statius.

4 Nauta (2006) 21–2 provides a brief but critically accurate account of the use of *recusatio* by early twentieth-century scholars, such as Lucas, Heinze, and Pasquali, as well as Fraenkel in the mid-twentieth century.

5 Lyne (1995) 32.

6 Nauta (2006) 23–6.

7 Nauta (2006) 37–9.

Callimachean and Vergilian *Recusatio*

In earlier work on Poliziano's reception of Statius, I argued for the mutable nature of Statius' *Silvae* by showing how this concept proved important to Poliziano's historical understanding of poetry, and how, moreover, it affected his sense of a pluralistic pedagogy.⁸ What I did not directly argue for then was how *recusatio* could be embodied completely in the figure of Statius or his poetry, or how it could also be viewed as a pedagogical tool. Although I implied as much by highlighting Poliziano's use of the *silva* genre as preludes to his courses on Vergil, Hesiod, Homer, and the history of poetry, I did not privilege the role that Statian *recusatio* plays. By adding Dryden's treatment of Statius to that of Poliziano's, we can see the instructive aspect of Statian *recusatio* take shape, while also drawing attention to Statius' significant influence on literary criticism in the Renaissance and early modern periods.

Understanding the instructive role of Statian *recusatio* requires a clearer picture of both Callimachus and Vergil than that briefly alluded to before.⁹ Although today the *Aetia* claims the attention of many scholars, the body of Callimachus' poetry left just as much of an indelible mark on the style, criticism, and instruction of Hellenistic and Roman poetry. Poets like Vergil understand that Callimachus responds to a world of drastic changes, following the conquests of Alexander the Great, whose rapid expansion of Macedonian hegemony left behind an inimitable and deep-seated Greek literary tradition. Callimachus' poetry and criticism reacts simultaneously to this distance from and dependence on this tradition. So, to reclaim part of this heritage, he composes in a great many genres, innovating—rather than inventing—as he goes. The epigram about Aratus' *Phaenomena* serves as a useful example of what Callimachus thinks he is able to do in his poetry:

Ἡσιόδου τό τ' αἶσιμα καὶ ὁ τρόπος· οὐ τὸν ἀοιδῶν
ἔσχατον, ἀλλ' ὀκνέω μὴ τὸ μελιχρότατον
τῶν ἐπέων ὁ Σολεὺς ἀπεμάξατο. χαίρετε, λεπταὶ
ῥήσιες, Ἀρήτου σύμβολον ἀγρυπνίης.

CALLIM. EPIGR. 29¹⁰

8 See Mengelkoch (2010a) esp. 87, 94, and 107.

9 There is little evidence that Dryden ever becomes familiar with Callimachus' poetry. Poliziano, however, knows Callimachus' poetry quite well, as attested in his *Silvae*, *Commento inedito alle selve di Stazio*, and the *Miscellanea*.

10 Beckby (1957), A.P. IX 507.

Solian Aratus adapted the song and style of Hesiod; yet not to its extreme epic end, but rather to its [lyrical] sweetest. So celebrate his refined style, proof of fitful nights.

According to this poem, Callimachus values four characteristics in poesy: selection of a model, *recusatio*, brevity, and erudition.¹¹ He praises Aratus for choosing to be like Hesiod and not compose an epic poem. Instead he chooses concision and recondite learning in the form of lucubrations.¹² The study of form and content allows Aratus to refuse the onerous task of composing epic poetry. Though, as Aratus' long lucubration suggests, Callimachus claims that it is equally difficult to write shorter, non-epic poetry. Moreover, the selection of Hesiod indicates the desire for using past forms to present contemporary cares, and in effect, creates the possibility to relate to literature of the past by organizing, discriminating between, and privileging genres of poetry. Still, Callimachus does not offer instruction in how to compose this type of poetry in the Aratus epigram. He clarifies this aspect of *recusatio* more deliberately in the *Aetia*.

In the *Aetia* prologue, Callimachus has Apollo help him formulate what we now know as *recusatio*:

καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρῶτιστον ἐμοῖς ἐπὶ δέλτον ἔθηκα
 γούνασιν, Ἄ[πό]λλων εἶπεν ὁ μοι Λύκιος·
 “.....] ... ἀοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον
 θρέψαι, τῇ γ' Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην·
 πρὸς δέ σε] καὶ τόδ' ἄνωγα, τὰ μὴ πατέουσιν ἄμαξαι
 τὰ στείβειν, ἐτέρων ἵχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά
 δίφρον ἐλ]ῃ μῆδ' οἶμον ἀνὰ πλατύν, ἀλλὰ κελεύθους
 ἀτρίπτο]υς, εἰ καὶ στειγοτέρην ἐλάσεις.”

CALLIM. *AET.* 25–33¹³

When I first set a writing-tablet on my knees, Lycian Apollo said: “Singer, feed your sacrificial victim so as to be as fat as possible, but, my friend, keep your Muse lithe. Likewise: pursue the paths that wagons can't; don't drive your chariot in the same ruts as others or on a wide road, but rather

11 Lombardo makes a similar assertion at Lombardo and Rayor (1988) xvii–xix.

12 On this *topos* of *agrupnia* in Statius, see Gervais, pp. 232–5 in this volume.

13 Pfeiffer (1949).

along the byways, though they are narrower. For we sing for those who love the cricket's clear trill, not the dissonance of the jackass."

Here, Callimachus places even greater value on erudition, or knowledge that lies beyond the crowd and is difficult to access. But the real change from his epigram about Aratus is in the mandate from Apollo. The *recusatio* is not just to keep his Muse slender while fattening his victim, but includes advice on how to do it. It is instructive: do this, not that. Love this, not that. Callimachus' refusal to write epic poetry is only the result of Apollo's lesson, and the emphasis is on the lesson itself. Heeding Apollo's advice, then, Callimachus becomes a measured poet, always detailed, but without becoming utterly obscure or heroic.

Vergil studies Callimachus and follows his Apollo. In the oft-cited sixth *Eclogue* Vergil recreates Callimachus' Apollo so that he is more explicit in his instructions:

Prima Syracosio dignata est ludere uersu
nostra neque erubuit siluas habitare Thalea.
cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem
uellit et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen."
nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt qui dicere laudes,
Vare, tuas cupiant et tristia condere bella)
agrestam tenui meditabor harundine Musam:
non iniussa cano.

VERG. *ECL.* 6.1–9

I first transferr'd to Rome Sicilian Strains:
Nor Blush'd the Dorick Muse to dwell on Mantuan Plains.
But when I try'd her tender Voice, too young;
And fighting Kings, and bloody Battels sung,
Apollo check'd my Pride; and bade me feed
My fatning Flocks, nor dare beyond the Reed.
Admonish'd thus, while every Pen prepares
To write thy Praises, Varus, and thy Wars,
My Past'ral Muse her humble Tribute brings;
And yet not wholly uninspir'd she sings.¹⁴

14 Translation by Dryden (1697, in Kinsley [1958] 894). I will return to these verses shortly.

Though I am using Dryden's translation of these verses, the *recusatio* still echoes Callimachus, save that now Vergil builds on the advice offered by Callimachus' Apollo. Here, Apollo clarifies his mandate not only about how Vergil should write but also what Vergil should write. The advice is normative in that it proposes the right kind of poetry for Vergil at the moment. Because of this instruction Vergil politely avoids epic in favor of bucolic poetry. Yet, his addition to the Callimachean original has far-reaching consequences. As Lyne shows, from this point on the very nature of *recusatio* mutates.¹⁵ Through Horace and others it becomes parodic and "looser," so that by the time Statius begins to write poetry *recusatio* has lost its original, Callimachean, instructive aspect. Avoiding epic now assumes a position less interested in pedagogy than in genre formation.¹⁶ In other words, because Flavian poets build *recusatio* into the very structure of their poems, genres and the poets themselves may be seen as being in the *recusatio* mode.

For the reception of Statius and the *Silvae* specifically by Poliziano and Dryden this seems to work in two ways. First, the *silva* genre becomes recognized as a hybrid, in which there is an overt display of varied and recondite learning. Second, Statius himself comes to embody his poetry. While Poliziano does not presage this in his promotion of Statius' works as pedagogical tools, Dryden inherits a disparate *silva* legacy that is diffuse and lacks restraint in form, content, and length. Nevertheless, Poliziano and Dryden do retain the instructive aspects of Callimachus' *recusatio*, albeit by explicitly absorbing and interpreting the pedagogical characteristic found in Vergil's *recusatio* from the sixth *Eclogue*. Poliziano demonstrates his understanding of Statian *recusatio* both in *Manto*, the first of his *Silvae*, where he re-presents the sixth *Eclogue* in verse form and in his *Oratio Super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis*. Dryden uses the *silva* genre as an experimental form for learning how to skillfully imitate Vergil's poetry. The results of his *silvae* are complete translations of the *Aeneid* and *Eclogues*, with a specific focus and comment on the sixth *Eclogue*'s instructive nature.

15 Lyne (1995) 32–7.

16 Nauta (2006) 35–9 discusses the development of the form of Statius' *Silvae* and Martial's *Epigrams* in terms of genre. I have extrapolated from this interpretation that *recusatio* may become a form in and of itself, at least in terms of how the *Silvae* are received by Poliziano and Dryden.

Recondite Learning in the *Vastae Silvae*

Poliziano heeds Apollo's advice found in both Vergil's and Callimachus' poems. He does not compose an epic poem. Rather he composes numerous poems in various meters and languages, covering a wide range of topics. Among his finest are the verse preludes to the courses he teaches at the Studium, which he calls *Silvae*. Still, Poliziano's interest in using the nature of Statius' poems as *recusatio* begins before he recites the first poem of his *Silvae*. In 1480, he delivers a novel speech entitled *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis*.¹⁷ In it, instead of praising both the Latinity and *gravitas* of Cicero and Vergil, he chooses to address the instructive attributes of the works of Quintilian and Statius. In a passage about Statius' *Silvae*, Poliziano states:

In hoc quidem, de quo agimus Statio, longe mihi ab iis, quae dicta sunt, aliena mens fuerit, ut enim non ierim inficias posse aliquid in tanta Latinorum supellectile inueniri, quod his libellis uel argumenti pondere uel mole ipsa rerum uel orationis perpetuitate facile antecellat, ita illud meo quasi iure posse uideor obtinere eiusmodi esse hos libellos, quibus uel granditate heroica uel argumentorum multiplicitate uel dicendi uario artificio uel locorum, fabularum, historiarum consuetudinumque notitia uel doctrina adeo quadam remota litterisque abstrusioribus nihil ex omni Latinorum poetarum copia antetuleris.

POL. ORATIO¹⁸

But concerning Statius, about whom we are speaking, my own judgment is very different from that which has been said. I do not deny that any number of things could be found in such a wealth of Latin writers that would easily surpass these little books of his in the substance of their reasoning or the significance of their content or the timelessness of their eloquence; but I also think that I can quite rightfully claim that, for their heroic grandeur, richness of topic, varied manner of speaking, knowledge of places, fables, stories, and customs, and wholly recondite learning in rarified letters, these little books are of such a sort that you would prefer nothing in the entire anthology of Latin poets to them.

This speech suggests how Statius' *Silvae* ought to be read and valued, namely by recognizing the poet's "recondite learning" (*doctrina remota*). The instructive aspect is clear: through the rediscovery of ancient texts, poets of the past

17 For an earlier discussion of what follows, see Mengelkoch (2010a) 92.

18 Garin (1952) 872.

come together with those of the present—expressing sentiment similar to Callimachus' poem about Aratus. Thus Statius is as equally useful in terms of pedagogy as Vergil, since what the reception of Statius' works offers is access to a comprehensive "knowledge of places, fables, stories, and customs." To further underscore this recondite notion, Poliziano refers to Statius and Quintilian as "new paths" (*uiaie nouae*) for his students to pursue; in fact, he exhorts them to do so: *nouas tamen quasique intactas uias ingrediamur, ueteres tritasque relinquamus* ("let us nevertheless venture upon new and pristine paths, leaving behind the old and worn ones," Pol. *Oratio*).¹⁹ The echoes of Callimachus' prologue to the *Aetia* are unmistakable; Statius' poetry pertains to the "narrow path," at least in Poliziano's mind.

Building on this oration, Poliziano continues to establish Statius' work as *recusatio* in *Manto* by presenting a bio-bibliographic panegyric to Vergil and his works in Callimachean terms of modeling, instruction, and erudition. Poliziano begins the prelude (*praelusio*) by recounting the tale of Achilles' first poetic trial.²⁰ Following a feast in Chiron's cave Orpheus entertains the Argonauts with a song. When he finishes, Achilles, though unrefined, tests his poetic skill by emulating him. Though his performance is rough, Achilles succeeds. As the anecdote pertains to *recusatio*, Achilles' imitation of Orpheus stands out because Orpheus becomes his model.²¹ Moreover, the distinction between the young Achilles and an implied older Orpheus recognizes the assimilation of the past and the present, while the emphasis on the tutorial nature of the setting, Chiron's cave, suggests the instructive nature of Poliziano's *Silvae* in general and *Manto* in particular. The setting also suggests the remoteness in which Chiron fosters Achilles' education. Each of these topics Poliziano will further develop as *Manto* takes shape, specifically when he considers himself a lumberjack, summarizes Vergil's sixth *Eclogue*, and concludes by recalling the remoteness of his learning.

Not far into *Manto* Poliziano facetiously bemoans the difficulty of beginning to compose his panegyric of Vergil by likening the experience to that of an Idan lumberjack's difficulty with selecting the choicest trees to harvest from the forest.

19 Poliziano's comment about the paths offered by an author like Quintilian borrows *inuitatas uias indagamus* from Cic. *Orat.* 3.11. See Mengelkoch (2010a) 93 for further observation about the layered use of *uiaie* in Poliziano's *Oratio*.

20 The dedication was not part of Poliziano's original, recited *Silvae*. He added it to the published version.

21 Poliziano is of course drawing the story from the *Achilleid*. For a more critical analysis, see Mengelkoch (2010a) 87–8.

Unde ego tantarum repetam primordia laudum?
 Aut qua fine sequar? Facit ingens copia rerum
 incertum. Sic frondifera lignator in Ida
 stat dubius, uastae quae primum robora siluae
 uulneret...

POL. MAN. 39–43²²

Where shall I begin to sing his praises? Where shall I end? The crushing bulk of material makes me doubtful, like a lumberjack on leafy Ida who stands unsure about which oak tree of the wide wood he will cut down first...

Poliziano will finish this passage by emphasizing that his role as a poetic lumberjack is to select (*metitur*) the appropriate material to construct his poem (*Man.* 46). In combination with *copia* (“abundance”), the surrounding trees serve to heighten his use of *uastae siluae* (“vast forest”). The result allows Poliziano to underscore that the *silva* genre, like the forest itself, demands selection.²³ Noting the various attributes of Vergil, Poliziano intends not only to privilege but also instruct. *Copia* serves to inform his selection (*metitur*) of the erudite and remote—as the setting on Mt. Ida suggests—content.

Poliziano furthers the remote element of the *uastae siluae* when he relates a shortened version of Vergil’s sixth *Eclogue*. In lines 137–44, he retells Chromis and Mnasylos’ imprisonment of a drunken Silenus and their delight at the songs he sings to them:

ebrius interea nostri nutritor Iacchi
 Silenus molli dormit resupinus in antro,
 ebrius et nimio uenas tumefactus alumno;
 securum pueri audaces atque improba nais
 inuadunt furtim deque ipsis uincla coronis,
 quae senis e mutilo modo uertice defluerunt,
 iniiciunt alacres promissaque carmina poscunt,
 carmina cum siluis totos mulcentia montes.

POL. MAN. 137–44²⁴

²² Fantazzi (2004) 8.

²³ See Mengelkoch (2010a) 97–9 for further analysis.

²⁴ Fantazzi (2004) 14.

Meanwhile drunken Silenus, who reared our Bacchus, sleeps sprawled out in a quiet cave, drunk, his veins swollen with too much of his foster-son, when some plucky boys and a brazen water-nymph quietly enter and quickly tie him up, unconscious, using as bonds the wreaths that have just slipped from his bald head. Now they demand his promised songs, songs that enchant the mountains and the woods alike.

Much in the same way that his earlier anecdote about Achilles emphasizes education, so too here Poliziano deliberately restates that which Vergil also stresses, namely that Silenus is a tutor and that his songs, though not epic, delight and charm the woodlands. While Poliziano does not relate the advice from Apollo, the intertextual aspect of his retelling highlights two characteristics of *recusatio*, instruction and delight in poems that are not epic. Moreover, he presents the love of that which is remote, namely the woodlands (*silvae*). By implication, then, he shows how his own use of form (*silva*) brings the present together with the past, and yet shows that the connection is inherent in the recognition of what Vergil himself does. Silenus, who plays Vergil in this instance, is not drunken and swollen (*tumefactus*) on wine alone, but on a body of knowledge and learning which can be used to teach remote things while delighting his captors—perhaps as Poliziano thinks of himself and his relationship with his students—and he can effusively display such learning.

At the end of *Manto*, Poliziano returns to the erudition that drives him to compose his enthusiastic encomium for Vergil. He exhorts his students to forsake the *uulguſ malignum* and join him in the sacred Callimachean remoteness that is unoccupied by the masses.²⁵ For Poliziano, the *silva* genre as represented through Statius, then, bridges Callimachean lucubrations, instruction, remote learning, and imitation, making Statian *recuastio* an affirmation of erudite exuberance and a model to emulate.

Return to Parnassus

By the end of the early modern period, Dryden finds the opposite to be true: too much erudition leads Statius and those who follow him into vulgar extravagance. In contrast to Poliziano, Dryden uses Statius to build a convincing

25 *Mollem sibi prorsus habeto / uestem aurum gemmas, tantum hinc procul esto malignum / uulguſ. ad haec nulli perrumpant sacra profani* ("Let the wicked crowd have their soft raiment, their gold, their precious stones, so long as they stay away. Let none who are profane force themselves into this sacred place," Pol. *Man.* 371–3.)

recusatio that promotes the composition of epic poetry by showing what not to do versus what ought to be done, an inversion of the Vergilean and Callimachean originals. In other words, do not follow Statius away from epic, but rather do follow Vergil toward it. Thus Dryden recasts Apollo's mandate as a prescription for design and judgment within not only poetry but also a poetic career by first tearing down Statius' poetry as a model, then adapting the *silva* genre, and finally reconfiguring the use of erudition and remote learning.

More than midway through his tenure as poet laureate Dryden launches a sharp attack on Statius. In the Epistle Dedicatory to *The Spanish Fryar* (1681), a play about monarchical usurpation, Dryden states:

A famous modern Poet us'd to sacrifice every year a Statius to Virgil's Manes: and I have Indignation enough to burn a D'amboys annually to the memory of Johnson. But now, My Lord, I am sensible, perhaps too late, that I have gone too far: for I remember some Verses of my own Maximin and Almanzor which cry, Vengeance upon me for their Extravagance, and which I wish heartily in the same fire with Statius and Chapman: All I can say for those passages, which are I hope not many, is, that I knew they were bad enough to please, even when I writ them . . . and am resolv'd I will settle my self no reputation by the applause of fools . . . If the Ancients had judg'd by the same measures which a common Reader takes, they had concluded Statius to have written higher than Virgil . . . Yet Virgil had all the Majesty of a lawfull Prince; and Statius onely the blus-tring of a Tyrant.²⁶

The act of burning Statius' *Thebaid* and George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* may seem a bit extreme, but what Dryden truly cares about here is his own poetic persona's former extravagances, or lack of judgment, in *Tyrannick Love* (1669), and how these instances will tarnish his literary legacy. Dryden's close readings both of Chapman and Statius show him that whereas Vergil and Jonson master the art of learned imitation and restraint, Statius and Chapman never do. Dryden's statement implies two literary antecedents, and pits one against the other: Juvenal's quip about Statius being able to please the crowd contrasts Jonson's desire for a "reader extraordinary."²⁷ Dryden's sentiment is clear: a poet ought to concern himself with delighting and teaching, not pleasing the "common Reader" so that he may receive the "applause of fools." Belittling

26 Scott and Saintsbury (1882–1893) 6.406.

27 See Juv. 82–7 and Jonson, *Catiline* (1611). Jonson, like Dryden, discriminates between common and extraordinary by dedicating his play to each type of person, individually.

Statius' poetry as mere entertainment, however, is only part of the critique, since burning a copy of Statius' work is not only expiation but also a lesson to be learned about progressing in a more Vergilian manner and *cursus*.²⁸ By presenting Vergil as the "lawfull Prince" in contrast to Statius, Dryden accuses Statius of polluting heroic poetry.²⁹ The expiation, therefore, burns away his own impurities and allows him to approach what he will later call a Vergilian "Moral," or the conceit that within a poem (specifically, an epic poem) the poet portrays virtue both through intent and content, that is design and judgment.

Before attempting to compose epic poetry, however, Dryden first seeks out a space to practice selecting models and organizing his output, namely his *Sylvae; or, The Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (1685). On the title page, he offers the reader some insight into the project through this quotation from the *Aeneid*: *non deficit alter | aureus; et simili frondescit uirga metallo* ("another golden one is not lacking; and a branch of a similar metal sprouts," Verg. *Aen.* 6.143–4).³⁰ According to Hammond, the meaning is twofold. First, this second volume of miscellaneous poems is equal to the prior volume, *Miscellany Poems* (1684); second, Dryden and his fellow translators are the second, golden branch. In other words, they are poets of the same stock and hence character as those whose works they are translating.³¹ This is significant. Dryden is not merely offering translations here, rather as he indicates in the preface the primary goal of his translations of Horace, Lucretius, Theocritus, and Vergil's *Aeneid* is to convey not only the sense of the poetry but also the intent and character of each poet, particularly Vergil. Thus the *silva* genre for Dryden becomes the place for proving himself a skilled imitator through a process of selection, namely choosing Vergil before all others. Whether he knows it or not, however, Dryden now participates directly in a type of Statian *recusatio* where the genre specifically allies the poet with a specific poetic tradition.

28 There is irony in Dryden's desire to burn Statius' epic, since it evokes the apocryphal story of Vergil wanting his own epic to be burned. Unrelated, there are perhaps overtones of the English Parliament's Indemnity and Oblivion Act 1660 here as well.

29 Heslin (2005) xv rightly observes that Vergil as "lawfull Prince" expresses Royalist anxieties in terms of parallels between Restoration England and Rome at the end of the Republic. I would only add that since Statius is considered by Dryden to be non-Augustan, he is a representative of unrestrained autocracy and usurpation both in a political and poetical sense. In general, Heslin's brief overview of Dryden's reception of Statius offers many insights. It also shows that there is much more to uncover, especially how Dryden reads Bossu's severe criticisms of Statius.

30 Dearing (1967).

31 Hammond (1999) 25.

Yet Dryden's forays into the *silva* genre must have eaten away at him. In 1695, in the preface to "Parallel of Painting and Poetry" he charges Statius with the unforgivable defect of imperfect design. His fault of extravagance is so great in all of his works that "Demosthenes or Cicero could not have defended" him.³² He begins with a critique of Statius' *Silvae* 1.1:

Virgil, if he could have seen the first Verses of the *Sylvae*, would have thought Statius mad in his fustian Description of the State on the brazen Horse. But that Poet was always in a Foam at his setting out, even before the Motion of the Race had warm'd him.³³

While his comment is keen, it is also somewhat fatuous and misleading. For it is not difficult to read Dryden's *Sylvae* as fustian productions themselves. His attempt to become the English Horace, Lucretius, or Vergil might very easily be construed as mad, and as Samuel Johnson will comment later they are certainly censurable.³⁴ Dryden's subsequent comments acknowledge as much, since instead of lingering to critique any of Statius' *Silvae* further he moves on to contrast the *Achilleid* with the *Aeneid*. This comparison too is slight and falls short.³⁵ When he finally does make his desired point Dryden states:

A work may be over-wrought, as well as under-wrought; too much labour often takes away the spirit by adding to the polishing so that there remains nothing but a dull correctness, a piece without any considerable faults, but with few beauties; for when the spirits are drawn off, there is nothing but *caput mortuum*. Statius never thought an expression could be bold enough; and if a bolder could be found, he rejected the first. Virgil had judgment enough to know daring was necessary; but he knew the difference betwixt a glowing colour and a glaring . . .³⁶

In short, the best poetry, from Dryden's perspective, has judgment as its primary characteristic. By depicting Statius' poetry as excessive and "glaring,"

32 Heslin (2006) xi, who notes the use of Cicero and Demosthenes as signifying Statius' highly rhetorical nature.

33 Also cited in Heslin (2006) xvi.

34 Heslin (2006) xvi.

35 Heslin (2006) xvi and 80–6 shows clearly that the beginning of the *Achilleid* presents all the Aristotelian conventions in order to flout them. My own sense is that Dryden realizes as much and, therefore, does not pursue his criticism much further than a sentence or so.

36 Scott and Saintsbury (1882–1893) 17.331–2.

Dryden implies that Statius simply tries too hard. Statius perverts his own poetry by continuously competing with Vergil's poetry and legacy, polishing his verses into a dull luster, and creating a poem that is as over-wrought and useless as a *caput mortuum*—the residue of distillation or sublimation “good for nothing, but to be flung away, all vertue being extracted.”³⁷ Although he censures Statius, Dryden's point is now more refined. No longer is Statius merely extravagant or lacking in design, he is over-wrought. Statius' erudition simply leads him away from Vergil in a kind of inverted poetic *cursus*, presaging the contemporary view of Statius today, in that it is said Statius moves away from the sanctified realm of serious heroic-epic and toward the Callimachean anti-heroic model.³⁸ Thus it comes as little surprise when Dryden uses Statius to argue for returning to a Vergilian model.

In the first sentence of the Dedication to his *Aeneis* Dryden asserts that the importance of Vergil's *Aeneid* lies in pedagogy. He begins:

A heroic poem, truly such, is undoubtedly the greatest work which the soul of man is capable to perform. The design of it is to form the mind to heroic virtue by example; 'tis conveyed in verse, that it may delight, while it instructs.³⁹

While he never particularly addresses “the soul of man,” the rest of Dryden's claim is notable. Vergil's design is perfect (i.e., complete), because the whole of the *Aeneid* instructs. However, because “*Virgil* is attack'd by many Enemies” Dryden “must endeavour to defend him as well as” he is able.⁴⁰ Framing his defense of Vergil in terms of pedagogy, Dryden immediately accuses Statius in semi-legal terms: “*Statius*, who, through his whole poem, is noted for want of conduct and judgment . . . went out of his way, as it were on propense malice, to commit a fault. . . .”⁴¹ Dryden's contention that the whole of the *Thebaid* is written with malice-aforethought is truly ridiculous, but it is also a serious indictment. Inherent in it is the claim that because Statius thinks that writing epic poetry is about outdoing a predecessor and not about bringing the predecessor's form to bear on the present moment, all Statius' skill and erudition

37 OED s.v. “caput mortuum” 2.

38 Heslin (2005) 101–3.

39 Kinsley (1958) 1003. The Aristotelian overtones are unmistakable, as well as those from Sidney, Corneille, *et al.*

40 Kinsley (1958) 1011. Dryden proves this in various ways throughout the Dedication.

41 Kinsley (1958) 1004.

goes for naught.⁴² The *Thebaid*, therefore, is a hubristic endeavor that makes Dryden announce: “On these terms, this *Capaneus* of a Poet ingag’d his two Immortal Predecessours, and his Success was answerable to his Enterprise.”⁴³

Statius as Capaneus is a highly suggestive image. Intending to rival the implied, apotheosized poets, Vergil and Homer, Statius recklessly misjudges his goal, and like Capaneus mid-battle, he transgresses the fundamental poetic laws that he is bound to, namely those of Parnassus, the home of literary judgment and invention.⁴⁴ To clarify how great literary judges rule, Dryden offers this hypothetical legal circumstance:

A Judge upon the Bench, may, out of good Nature, or at least interest, encourage the Pleadings of a puny Councillor, but he does not willingly commend his Brother Serjeant at the Bar, especially when he controuls his Law, and exposes that ignorance which is made sacred by this place.

Since he considers himself a resident of Parnassus, Dryden is just as much a judge of Statius’ work as of Vergil’s. In light of the latter, Dryden exasperatedly states about the former, “I can think of nothing to plead for him.” This declaration is farcical, of course. Dryden never attempts to plead for Statius, and his remark elsewhere that not even Demosthenes or Cicero could win the day on behalf of Statius belies this statement. Rather, his defense of Vergil can only take shape through the prosecution of Statius, hence in Statian terms. By beginning with Statius, Dryden is now free to discourse on Vergil’s ability to instruct, which he does in full. If anything, Dryden becomes as over-wrought in his encomiastic defense of Vergil as Statius does in trying to rival him. The difference, as Dryden admits, is that “the Works of Judgment, are like the Diamond, the more they are polish’d, the more luster they receive.”⁴⁵ While this statement deliberately contrasts the *caput mortuum* that Dryden uses to describe the *Thebaid*, it also prompts him to clarify again where the “Works of

42 This is precisely why Dryden focuses on the funeral games episodes for his censure of Statius—they do not serve the whole of the work.

43 Kinsley (1958) 1004.

44 Kinsley (1958) 1008. Dryden mentions Parnassus here both to praise the Earl of Musgrave, to whom he dedicates his translation and whom he now includes as a resident of Parnassus, and to remind his readers about his own rightful place among its inhabitants though he is no longer poet laureate.

45 Kinsley (1958) 1053.

Judgment” emanate from: “the Highest Court of Judicature”; in other words, the courtroom of Mt. Parnassus.⁴⁶

The use of Mt. Parnassus in the Dedication brings Dryden’s *recusatio* back to Vergil’s sixth *Eclogue*, and, hence, to Statius. Unlike many translators, Dryden deliberately attends to the Hellenic heritage of Vergil’s poem. By translating Thalia (Verg. *Ecl.* 6.2) into “the Dorick Muse” he offsets his substitution of “Mantuan plains” for woods (*siluas*, 6.2), resulting in a direct contrast between Thalia’s rightful and natural home, Mt. Parnassus, and Vergil’s. Dryden’s implication is clear: the literary judgment reserved for inhabitants of Mt. Parnassus is transferred to Vergil. Moreover, while Vergil immediately stresses the sylvan location of his poetry and implies its remoteness, Dryden delays expressing the sylvan nature until the latter part of the introduction to the poem proper, where he offers the following:

These rural Poems, and their lowly Strain,
The name of Varus oft inscrib’d shall see,
In every Grove, and every vocal Tree;
And all the Silvan reign shall sing of thee.⁴⁷

Though his treatment of the structure and vocabulary of Vergil’s Latin is highly interpretive Dryden succeeds in emphasizing the sylvan nature of the poem. Of particular significance here is that since Dryden delays his emphasis, Vergil’s Callimachean *recusatio* garners little attention. His focus is clearly on the setting and content of the poem, particularly Silenus’ role. In the preface Dryden tells his readers that Silenus is metonymy for Vergil, and in the Argument that precedes his translation he tells them that Silenus is a tutor, and his audience his pupils. His story about the “Formation of the Universe” and the “Original of Animals” is heard “With deeper silence, or with more regard” than the “awful Phoebus” or “Thracian Bard” could muster if they tried to do the same.⁴⁸ His translation, therefore, overtly privileges the sylvan nature of the poem as a means to the poet’s success. Since Dryden defines poetic success in terms of judgment, the implicit reference to Parnassus in Thalia at the beginning of the poem allows him to complete his *recusatio* by reconfiguring erudition and remoteness in terms of instruction. Both the adoption and adaptation of the *silva* genre to promote Vergil now give way to explicit directives against writing like Statius. For Dryden Vergil is the supreme sylvan poet, not Statius. By

46 Kinsley (1958) 1053.

47 Kinsley (1958) 894.

48 Kinsley (1958) 894–5.

yoking his condemnation of Statius together with the declaration of Vergil's instructive intent, Dryden's *recusatio* becomes a manifest rejection of not only Statius' version of conventional epic poetry found in the *Thebaid* but also the concept of the mock-heroic poem or poems with epic themes in smaller forms. His emphasis on the fustian nature of Statius' poetry deliberately reinforces the thoughtless nature of Statius and his inability to judge or design his poems and poetry with an eye toward delighting or instructing. The sylvan nature of Vergil's sixth *Eclogue* no longer suggests that the reader seek refuge in the Callimachean-like remote and recondite poets such as Statius, but in Vergil, whose greatest achievement is the *Aeneid*.

For both Dryden and Poliziano Statius is rarely a remote thought. The genre he creates leads Poliziano to exhortations in *Manto* and the *Oratio*, in which he urges his students to follow him, instructing them to take the lesser-trod paths where they will find through the woods of Statius, as it were, a Vergil they may not know exists. For him, Statius proves an example of erudition and, through that erudition, instruction. For Dryden Statius and his works prove instructive in so far as providing examples of what not to do. Through his close readings of Statius, and his long-term criticism of his works, Dryden creates an unlikely *recusatio*, one that promotes the composition of epic poetry by avoiding Statius. Yet, without him his conception of Vergil and himself, too, pales almost completely. In the end, it says quite a bit about the significance of Statius in the Renaissance and early modern period that the two greatest poet-critics of their eras define themselves and their views of poetry against the backdrop of Statian *recusatio*.⁴⁹

49 I would like to thank Charles Fantazzi for reviewing this paper.

Naturalizing Statius

Susanna Braund

The first English translator of Statius' *Thebaid*, Thomas Stephens, explicitly set out to "naturalize" his poet, as he tells us in the preface to his 1648 translation of books 1–5 of the *Thebaid*. More than 350 years later, the authors of a 2007 prose translation of the *Thebaid* declare that "the prose must be as natural as possible" with all avoidance of "talking forsoothly."¹ In between, translators make different claims, or none at all. The chronological scope of this study ranges from 1648 through some of the eighteenth-century translations and then jumps to the bevy of translations from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, which mirrors the modern recuperation of the epic. My preliminary task is to discover what translators mean when they invoke the concept of what is "natural." I then ask to what extent the aim of "naturalization" coheres with the form and content of Statius' epic, given the verdict of the author of the 1928 Loeb Classical Library translation that Statius "fails to avoid unnaturalness."² How appropriate is it that a poem of bleakness and "unmitigated despair," characterized as baroque, luxurious, and mannerist and with "a reliance on the grotesque and the horrific"³ should be "naturalized"? A comparative study of translations such as undertaken here can refine our views of the essence of Statius and help us decide which, if any, of the translations capture that essence. As will become clear, a major difference between the translations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the one hand and the twentieth and twenty-first century translations on the other is the availability of a ready-made epic idiom. We have none, whereas earlier translators had the likes of Spenser and Milton along with preeminent epic translators Dryden and Pope to provide templates. However, as I shall argue, that is not necessarily an advantage to the older translators.

My analysis will focus mainly on verse translations of the entire epic, with occasional glances at other material. For the earlier period I am deeply indebted to Gillespie's chapter "Statius and the Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Poetry" in his book *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New*

¹ Hall *et al.* (2007) 2.vii.

² Mozley (1928) xxi.

³ Joyce (2008) xii, quoting from Burgess (1971–1972) 59.

Literary History.⁴ Gillespie's Appendix to that chapter contains a checklist of the earliest English translations of Statius, starting with Thomas Stephens' 1648 translation,⁵ ending with William Lillington Lewis' 1767 translation,⁶ and including Alexander Pope's *Thebaid*⁷ along with several translations of shorter excerpts, mostly by followers of Pope. To these I shall add, from the twentieth century, J. B. Poynton's translation in Spenserian stanzas⁸ and A. D. Melville's translation,⁹ and from the twenty-first century, those by Charles Stanley Ross¹⁰ and Jane Wilson Joyce.¹¹

At the start of his chapter, Gillespie briefly charts the changing fortunes of Statius from the high esteem shown him by Dante (who attributes to him a hidden Christianity)¹² and by Chaucer, through deep appreciation in the eighteenth century, when he was viewed as second only to Vergil among the Latin epicists,¹³ to the nadir of mid-nineteenth century disdain. Gillespie's overview is complemented by the much wider scope of Ross' introduction to his translation. In the section entitled "The Influence of the *Thebaid*,"¹⁴ Ross provides the big picture of the reception of Statius, in which the long chill preceding the rehabilitation of the past few decades can be seen to run against the grain. Ross urges us to revisit Fulgentius' "imaginative reading" of the *Thebaid* as "an antidote to the dismissal of Statius that occupied the antiallegorical interval of criticism that lasted from roughly the English Civil War to World War II"¹⁵ and he suggests that Spenser's *Faerie Queene* evinces the most palpable influence of Statius upon English Renaissance literature.¹⁶

Instead of offering analysis of each translation in turn, my method will be to examine the handling of several passages from *Thebaid* 1 that demonstrate Statius' range of poetic powers. These include the allusive, mythology-

4 Gillespie (2011) 76–92, developing Gillespie (1999).

5 Stephens (1648).

6 Lewis (1767).

7 Pope (1712).

8 Poynton (1971).

9 Melville (1992).

10 Ross (2004).

11 Joyce (2008).

12 On this see more fully the discussion of "Dante's Statius" by Lewis (1966) 94–102; see also Heslin, pp. 512–26 in this volume.

13 Gillespie (2011) 76 convincingly describes "the transformation of Statius into something like an honorary Augustan poet."

14 Ross (2004) xvi–xxvii. As reviewer Nau (2007) 72 remarks, this section is "vital for any scholar assessing the importance of Statius to European literature" and it "might easily furnish an outline for another book."

15 Ross (2004) xvi.

16 Ross (2004) xx.

laden opening of the poem; lines from the first speech of the poem, in which Oedipus summons Tisiphone to place a curse upon his sons; part of Statius' vivid description of Tisiphone's horrifying appearance; a two-line authorial comment by Statius; and, finally, part of the narrative of the fist fight between Polynices and Tydeus on Adrastus' threshold, which Pope excluded from his translation. Limitations of space do not permit a comprehensive comparison between all the translations mentioned above, but it will be possible to highlight some particularly egregious phenomena, both positive and negative.

Naturalizing the *Thebaid*

Central to my discussion will be what is "natural." Before we consider what Stephens meant by "naturalizing" Statius, consider what Ritchie, Hall, and Edwards say in the brief introduction to their 2007 translation accompanying their text:

[T]he prose must be as natural as possible: we have been at pains to avoid . . . "Wardour Street" parlance and . . . "talking forsoothly." Nobody ever spoke like that in the history of our language, and translationese is the death of sincerity of style.¹⁷

Admirable sentiments, but not reflected in their effort, which abounds in unusual word order and vocabulary choices imbued by old-fashioned translationese. Thus Domitian is addressed as "O additional ornament to the glory of Latium" (*Theb.* 1.22), as if he were an extra china dog on the mantelpiece. In moments of throwback to the King James translation of the Bible, Oedipus is made to remind Tisiphone that he "begot sons for you" (70) and Adrastus is described as being "without issue of the stronger sex" (393). "Phoebe travailing red among the clouds" (105–6) seems distinctly Victorian. Due warning is provided in the very opening lines, challenging lines to translate, to be sure, and to which we will return. But archaisms, which can convey the majesty of ancient epic, do not necessarily resonate with today's readers:

Of brothers' battle-lines, of alternating kingship fought out in impious hatred, and the guilt of Thebes, the passion of the Muses has come upon my mind to unfold the tale. Whence, goddesses, do you bid me set out?

THEB. 1.1–4

17 Hall *et al.* (2007) 2.vii. This volume accompanies their text of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* (Hall *et al.* [2007] 1).

That “whence” and “bid” give the game away: whoever speaks like that these days? This prose translation may be an easy target, but I thought it worth noting that even in 2007 some translators could still be under the sway of Mozley in his 1928 Loeb.¹⁸

With that in mind, let us see how Stephens imagined his project. In his preface “To the ingenuous reader” he presents this “piece of *Statius* metaphrased” and asserts that he will be “well satisfied, if thy courtesie will allow him to be Naturaliz’d amongst us.” He goes on to say that his translation “was intended for a help to my Scholars, for understanding the Poet.” In other words, this is a textbook for use in schools,¹⁹ into which Stephens has incorporated “marginall explications of the Poetick story” to illuminate “the darke and mysterious places of the Poem: Which, I dare say, would not be so much neglected, but that it is so little understood.” One of the favorable advertisements prefixed to the translation, a poem by Robert Baldocke, praises Stephens’ work in exactly these terms with the claim:

From the old Latin stock new stemmes are sprung,
Statius new borne, speakes a new mother tongue.

Few would concur with this judgment (it seems all too easy to slip into criticizing his translation), but Stephens’ work was significant and had significant effects on his most famous successor, Pope, as we will see below.

Consultation of the *Oxford English Dictionary* shows that “naturalize” as used by Stephens means roughly what we might expect:

- 2a. More generally: to make a thing native, common, or fitting; to put (something foreign) on a level with what is native.
- 2b. To introduce or adopt (a word, phrase, etc.) into a language or into common use; also in extended use.

2b. is especially pertinent, and several of the examples provided involve translation between languages. One of the earliest instances predates Stephens’ usage by fifty years: George Peele in his *The Honour of the Garter* (1593) speaks of fellow Tudor poet John Harington, who made a loose English translation of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* in 1591, as one “That hath so purely

18 Mozley (1928) similarly has “Whence, O goddesses, do you bid me begin?” for *Theb.* 1.3–4.

19 And more: see Newlands (2012) 106–7 on Stephens’ unmistakably royalist agenda; e.g., “The ode that is printed on the frontispiece represents Stephens’ translation of the *Thebaid* as an act of cultural and political recuperation, here closely associated with the education of the young as the state’s future citizens.”

naturalized / Strange words, and made them all free denizens." The analogy has legal reference: under the Tudors, the king had the sole prerogative of creating "denizens." In other words, "the power over language attributed to Harington by Peele here is equivalent to the power of the King to make foreigners English subjects."²⁰ The word "naturalize" seems to approximate closely to the concept of "domestication" used by translation theorists in recent decades.²¹

Stephens sets out to make Statius accessible to his readership. But he and most subsequent translators acknowledge more or less explicitly the difficulty and obscurity of Statius' Latin, and some indicate that they wish to convey this difficulty and obscurity in their translations. For example, in the recent Loeb Classical Library translation, Shackleton Bailey remarks on the challenge of achieving "the proper balance between fidelity and readability,"²² while back in 1767 Lewis wrote: "such is the Disparity of the two Languages; and of all the Latin Authors Statius perhaps is the most difficult."²³ Joyce talks of the complexity of the narrative in terms of its "labyrinthine channels,"²⁴ while Melville highlights the ways that Statius "strains the Latin language to extremes" and describes these strains as "an important element of his style."²⁵ Joyce offers as signposts through this complexity alternations between italic and Roman font (using italics for Statius' authorial remarks), words printed in upper case, what she calls "stanzaic breaks,"²⁶ and offset passages of text, all of which can be justified but none of which represent the original Latin text faithfully. Melville has chosen blank verse with an occasional rhyming couplet for closure, following closely the method he developed for his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; whether he is right in thinking that the same style "is equally appropriate to the *Thebaid*"²⁷ remains highly dubious and certainly needs to be argued explicitly. Ross seems conflicted: he cites the view of the Renaissance theorist Giraldo Cinthio that Statius' work was rough and far from natural in its verses and yet he asserts that he has "tried to find a smooth modern syntax to render the high

20 I quote from Camlot (2006) 489. The translation context persists into the twentieth century, for example, in the writings of the linguist Eugene Nida, although the metaphor is less palpable than in the sixteenth-century usage: "when source and receptor languages represent very different cultures . . . many basic themes and accounts . . . cannot be 'naturalized' by the process of translating" (Nida [1964] 168).

21 See Venuti (1995) 99–147 for a valuable discussion of the debate.

22 Shackleton Bailey (2003) 2.7.

23 Lewis (1767) xxii = online image xxxviii.

24 Joyce (2008) xxxiv.

25 Melville (1992) xlv.

26 Joyce (2008) xxxv.

27 Melville (1992) xlv.

style”²⁸ and justifies his use of the iambic pentameter, with rhyme “whenever available,” as being “easy to follow.”²⁹ We will take a closer look at these modern translations shortly, but for now let us focus on the idea of the “unnaturalness” of Statius’ poem, a phenomenon observed by several translators, for example, the first Loeb translator, J. H. Mozley, who finds Statius wanting in comparison with Vergil: “part of Vergil’s genius consists in being able to give a soft, mysterious effect without any sense of unnaturalness. Statius aims at a like effect, but fails to avoid unnaturalness.”³⁰ If “unnaturalness” is such a prominent feature of the poem, then I wonder why translators seek to erase that in favor of creating a fluid, easy read?³¹

Lewis’ preface to his 1767 translation shows great sensitivity to the “unnatural” features of Statius’ epic and may be read with great profit for its many astute comments.³² For example, when he discusses “the Sentiments” in the poem he says:

They are never low or vulgar, often just and noble, but sometimes ranting and unnatural. He never falls, but is often lost among the Clouds, by soaring too high, and too studiously avoiding every Thing, that has the Appearance of being flat and frigid. In this Article he resembles our Countryman Lee. He is less moral than Vergil, less familiar than Homer, and less philosophical than Lucan.³³

The poem’s characteristics are perhaps most deftly captured by Boyle, in his introduction to the translation of *Thebaid* 10 by Austin and Morse commissioned for the volume *Roman Poets of the Early Empire*: this “Vergilian palimpsest” has a “baroque, theatrical, mannerist, luxuriant, at times hyperbolic style (often contemned) [that] entexts the nightmare of its different world” [sc. from that of the *Aeneid*].³⁴ In other words, given the extremely self-conscious

28 Ross (2004) xxxv. Cf. again “This new translation seeks to give Statius a modern voice in clear, unstilted, and rhythmic American verse” (xi).

29 Ross (2004) xxxvi.

30 Mozley (1928) xxi.

31 The same question applies even more starkly to Lucan, whose aversion from narrative progress and whose embrace of tactics of delay, such as apostrophe, create specific challenges for his translators. See my note on my translation in Braund (1992) liii–liv.

32 Of Lewis we know virtually nothing; see Gillespie (2011) 90.

33 Lewis (1767) xv–xvi = online images xxxi–xxxii.

34 Austin and Morse (1991) 219. My chosen strategy with its focus on book 1 does not permit proper consideration of the Austin and Morse translation of book 10 here. Entirely commendable is their line for line equivalence, achieved by the longer English line of eleven to fifteen syllables with (if possible) six stresses, as remarked by Dominik (1993b) in his

and at times “grotesque” and “horrific” content of the poem, is it even appropriate to seek to “naturalize” the *Thebaid*?³⁵

Modern Translations

Let’s take a look at the opening of the poem and then at the modern translations. The opening seventeen lines would have been dazzling to Statius’ original audience in their deft, allusive journey through Theban mythology, but these references are more likely to bewilder less experienced modern audiences and therefore require difficult decisions by translators concerning clarity and explication.³⁶

Fraternas acies alternaque regna profanis
 decertata odiis sotesque evolueret Thebas
 Pierius menti calor incidit. unde iubetis
 ire, deae? gentisne canam primordia dirae,
 Sidonios raptus et inexorabile pactum
 legis Agenoreae scrutantemque aequora Cadmum?
 longa retro series, trepidum si Martis operti
 agricolam infandis condentem proelia sulcis
 expediam penitusque sequar, quo carmine muris
 iusserit Amphion Tyriis accedere montes,
 unde graues irae cognata in moenia Baccho,
 quod saevae Iunonis opus, cui sumpserit arcus
 infelix Athamas, cur non expauerit ingens
 Ionium socio casura Palaemone mater.
 atque adeo iam nunc gemitus et prospera Cadmi
 praeteriisse sinam: limes mihi carminis esto
 Oedipodae confusa domus.³⁷

THEB. 1.1–17

The challenges here are many: the way Latin syntax allows the postponement of subject and verb (1–3); the address to the Muses (4), who are to be identified from the adjective “Pierian” (3); the oblique allusions to the ancient tales of

review of Melville’s translation, which he rightly criticizes for its expansion on the Latin by twenty-five per cent.

35 See Joyce (2008) xii for Statius’ “reliance on the grotesque and the horrific.”

36 I take the terms “dazzle” and “bewilder” from Joyce (2008) xxxiii, in her Introduction.

37 I print the text of Shackleton Bailey (2003) unless otherwise stated.

Thebes (5–14); the density of phrases such as *trepidum* . . . *Martis operti* / *agricolam* (7–8); the moral loading of words such as *sontes* (2) and *infandis* (8); the long sequence of indirect questions, something we just don't do in modern English (9–14); the pregnant significance of the word *cognata* (11); and the moral loading of the epithet *confusa* (17).

I reproduce below the four modern verse translations, which between them exhibit an impressive range of strategies and display some marked successes and failures.

Poynton (1971):

- 1 Of brothers fighting out in hate so fell
The war which change of yearlong rule began
And guilty Thebes ye fire my heart to tell,
Ye Muses. Then to your historian
Vouchsafe direction: should the work I plan
Start from the source of that vile progeny,
The rape from Sidon and Agenor's ban
Immutable and search that o'er the sea
Drove Cadmus? Long from there the journey back would be;
- 2 Long, as I told how next the ploughman quaking
At foes unseen sowed war in evil ground,
And, every detail in succession taking,
Taught what Amphion sang when, to the sound
Responsive, Tyrian boulders gathered round,
What angry Ino did, what quarry drew
Athamas' shaft and why the mother found
Safer the sea, when down herself she threw
And down her babe, why wrath with Thebes its own god grew.
- 3 Aside then all that chanced, or good or ill,
To Cadmus will I leave. My bounds shall be
The fall of Oedipus' dread house.

Melville (1992):

The strife of brothers and alternate reigns
Fought for in impious hatred and guilt

Of tragic Thebes, these themes the Muses' fire
 Has kindled in my heart. Whence, Heavenly Ones,
 Am I to take the road? Shall I relate
 The origins of that disastrous race,
 Europa's rape, Agenor's ordinance
 Inexorable, Cadmus' searching quest
 Across the sea? Far back the chain would reach
 Should I recount the trembling husbandman
 Of hidden warfare and the battles sown
 In fiendish furrows, should my verse pursue
 What song Amphion sang to bid the hills
 Of Tyre advance to build a city's walls,
 Whence fell the weight of Bacchus' wrath upon
 His kindred battlements, what deed was done
 By savage Juno, against whom the bow
 Of ill-starred Athamas was drawn, and why
 Poor Ino, with Palaemon, fearlessly
 Plummeted to the vast Ionian sea.
 Rather at present I'll permit the joys
 And agonies of Cadmus to have passed.
 The troubled house of Oedipus shall set
 The limit to my lay.

Ross (2004):

My mind takes Pierian fire. Fraternal strife
 unfolds: unholy hatred, alternating reigns,
 the criminality of Thebes. How far,
 O goddesses, should I go? To the beginnings,
 in Sidon, of the unholy race? the rape?
 the rigor of Agenor's law? to Cadmus,
 Agenor's son, who scrutinized the seas?

Events stretch back in time. Should I rehearse
 the warriors the farmer's plow unearthed,
 his fear, unspeakable furrows of dark Mars?
 Or, if I follow further: with what song
 were Tyrian mountains moved by King Amphion
 to form defensive walls? What was the source

of Bacchus' hostile rage against his homeland?
 What did fierce Juno do? At whom did maddened
 Athamas bend his bow? Why did the mighty
 Ionian not terrify the mother
 who leaped into that ocean with Palaemon?

But here, at present, now I will permit
 the groans of Cadmus to elapse, with his
 prosperity. I will set my song this limit:
 the horrors of the house of Oedipus.

Joyce (2008):

BROTHERS CROSSING swords; held by turns, their kingdom, vied
 for in fiendish hatred; the guilt of Thebe—these my mind, struck
 by Pierian fire, burns to unfold: where do You bid me begin,
 Goddesses? Should I sing of the dire race and its origins—
 Sidonian rapes, the merciless terms of exile imposed
 by Agenor's law, Cadmus scouring the seas for Europa?
 A long series, if I trace events back to that plowman
 trembling at covert foes, sowing combat in unholy
 ground; if I dig deep to find what notes Amphion plucked,
 coaxing Tyrian stones to approach and build a bulwark;
 if I strive to learn why Bacchus raged at familial walls,
 what role savage Juno played, at whom unfortunate
 Athamas aimed his bow, why Palaemon's mother had no
 qualms, leaping with him into the vast Ionian Sea.

*No! I will instead, at least for now, let Cadmus' groans
 and good fortune go: the confines of my song shall be
 the confused House of Oedipus.*

Poynton takes the prize for attempting to convey the difficulty and complexity of the Latin, with his choice of intricate Spenserian stanzas. As Melville remarks, this shows admirable "courage and ingenuity, but the result proves the error of his choice."³⁸ That said, his lines maintain fairly consistently the self-consciously elevated style of the Latin and catch its allusiveness. In comparison, Melville's opening sounds wordy and shapeless, with lamentable

38 Melville (1992) xlvii.

choices of vocabulary. For example, “the trembling husbandman / of hidden warfare” is both old-fashioned and impenetrable, while the use of “whence” and “my lay” (soon amplified by “thee,” “thy,” “would fain possess,” “well-wont,” “dotard,” “begot,” “grievous,” “portals,” “loth,” and other such bloop) establish his chosen idiom as Victorian translationese. Both translations become clearer once one consults the Latin.

What is most laudable in Ross is the way he breaks up the long Latin periods—Statius typically operates with sentences four to five lines long, but here, at the start of the poem, he has a mammoth eight line sentence (7–14)—into much shorter sentences and phrases and turns the intractable series of indirect questions into direct questions. He finds a fine balance between lofty Latinate terminology and accessible Anglo-Saxon vocabulary: “Fraternal strife / unfolds: unholy hatred, alternating reigns, / the criminality of Thebes” is a good example. He does this with a regular iambic pentameter line, which inevitably (given the differences between Latin and English, including inflexion and articles) means he requires more lines than the Latin; however, he commendably inserts the Latin line numbers, to help readers keep track. He does not say this, but it seems to me that his translation is in the spirit of Fitzgerald’s 1983 translation of the *Aeneid* in its rapidity.³⁹

What is most laudable in Joyce is her line-for-line equivalence, which is invaluable for readers who also want to consult the scholarship on the poem. She achieves this equivalence by using a longer line than does Ross, “a loose, six-beat line . . . with a strong line end.”⁴⁰ This gives her more scope for unpacking the dense allusions, for example, “Cadmus scouring the seas for Europa,” a detail not articulated in the Latin. Yet her translation is often still too tightly packed to be readily comprehensible: in “held by turns, their kingdom, vied / for in fiendish hatred,” it is not immediately clear that “their kingdom” is the subject, and the phrases “covert foes” and “familial walls” don’t do the work they need to, while “the confused House of Oedipus” sells the Latin short, since English “confused” relates to a mental state, while Statius is referring here to incest. That said, she handles the series of indirect questions well, by inserting additional verbs denoting the act of inquiry: “if I trace” for *sequar* (9), then “if I dig deep” (perhaps glancing back at *penitus* [9]) and “if I strive.”

Clearly, there is no unanimity among these modern translators about the appropriate form. Poynton’s adoption of Spenserian stanzas is intelligent and commendable in its assertion of a connection with the English epic tradition. According to Ross, “Statius’ influence on Renaissance English literature is most

39 Fitzgerald (1983).

40 Joyce (2008) xxxv.

vividly felt in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. . . . Spenser must have regarded Statius as a master of horror."⁴¹ He provides striking evidence for this argument and goes on to suggest that the brawl between Britomart and other knights in a pigsty outside Malbecco's house (*FQ* 2.9) derives from the fist-fight between Polynices and Tydeus outside Adrastus' palace in *Thebaid* 1 (discussed below). Yes, Poynton's choice is ambitious and no, it does not always work, but it has the high merit of reminding readers that they are engaging with epic poetry.

The other three modern translators do not manage to create a sense of epic idiom—a real challenge, to be sure, in the absence of any modern models.⁴² The choice of pentameters by both Melville and Ross has inevitable consequences in terms of expansion, as is famously the case with Dryden's *Aeneis*. But at least Dryden's *Aeneis* has the tautness offered by the rhymes of the heroic couplets; for translators preferring Miltonic blank verse there comes the need to pare and hone to make their English muscular enough to match the Latin, something Ruden has achieved in her recent translation of the *Aeneid*.⁴³ Of the two Statius translations, Melville's feels more formless and flabby, while Ross' bold disruption of the long un-English Latin periods does at least provide a degree of density. Joyce's longer line should allow her more room to maneuver, but instead of using this extra space to her advantage she produces an often contorted type of English that cannot be described as epic.

Eighteenth-Century Translations

When we turn to the eighteenth-century translators, we are in a different world, a world in which epic poetic idiom was currency. Pope's translation of *Thebaid* book 1 was undertaken when he was fourteen years old and published ten years later, in 1712, after revisions inspired by the critiques of his friend Henry Cromwell.⁴⁴ Pope's interest in Statius was evidently sparked by his reading of Stephens' translation at a young age, but when we compare the two translations, Pope owes little to Stephens and was more influenced by Milton

41 Ross (2004) xx.

42 In literature at any rate; Ross (2004) xi makes fine cinematic analogies with *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) and before that *The Seven Samurai* (1954). Cinema probably provides our only contemporary epic form.

43 Ruden (2008).

44 As revealed in the correspondence that survives; Audra and Williams (1961) 347–9 reconstruct the process. Pope's letter of January 19, 1708 (probably) to Henry Cromwell may be found at Sherburn (1956) 36–8.

and by Dryden's *Aeneis*.⁴⁵ Of course, he was already developing his own epic voice, soon manifested in his translations of the Homeric poems (published 1715 onwards), and he shows himself precociously comfortable with the heroic couplet.

To see this in action, let's take an example from one of Statius' speeches, a feature for which he was consistently praised.⁴⁶ Here is the opening speech in the poem (*Theb.* 1.56–87), Oedipus' invocation to Tisiphone to place a curse upon his sons. This speech includes a very long period with numerous *si* clauses, a challenge to render into English:

annue, Tisiphone, peruersaque uota secunda:
 si bene quid merui, si me de matre cadentem
 fouisti gremio et traiectum uulnere plantas
 firmasti, si stagna peti Cirrhaea bicorni
 interfusa iugo, possem cum degere falso
 contentus Polybo, trifidaeque in Phocidos arto
 longaeuum implicui regem secuique trementis
 ora senis, dum quaero patrem, si Sphingos iniquae
 callidus ambages te praemonstrante resolui,
 si dulces furias et lamentabile matris
 conubium gauisus ini noctemque nefandam
 saepe tuli natosque tibi, scis ipsa, paraui,
 mox auidus poenae digitis cedentibus⁴⁷ ultro
 incubui miseraque oculos in matre reliqui:
 exaudi, si digna precor quaeque ipsa furenti
 subiceres.

THEB. 1.59–74

First, here is Stephens' very competent and full translation of these lines, with fine deployment of enjambment in tension with the rhymes:

45 See the Introduction to Pope's translations in the edition of Audra and Williams (1961) 346–52.

46 Thus, for example, Lewis (1767) xv = online image xxxi, in his preface: "Adrastus must not talk like Polynices, nor Capaneus like Amphiaras. Statius in this Particular deserves our highest Applause. His Heroes always speak, as they act: his Orations are nervous, animated, eloquent, not so prolix as Lucan's, nor so sententious, as those of Vergil. Though admirable in all, he principally excels in the mournful and pathetic."

47 Others print the variant *caedentibus*.

Thou too, *Tisiphone*, which knowest best
 That voice, th'hast heard so oft, grant this request:
 If I have serv'd thee truly, whom I found
 Nurse to my infancy, who heal'dst the wound
 They bored through my feet; If I did go
 At thy command to *Cyrrha's* streames, which flow
 Twixt the two-headed Hill, when I might rather
 Have staid with *Polybus*, my supposed Father.
 Where in the Tower of three-top'd *Phocis*, I
 Grappled with th' hoary King, and did deny
 Life to his trembling joints, seeking to find
 What there I lost, a Father: If my mind
 By thee inlightned could unty the knot
 Of *Sphinx* her riddle: If the incestuous blot
 By which I stain'd my Mothers bed brought joyes
 To my free spirit; where I got thee boyes.
 Straight on these hands I fell desiring death,
 And to my Mother did mine eyes bequeath.
 Then here I aske a noble boone, and that,
 Which thou thy selfe would'st prompt.

What does Pope, whom Lewis praises for making Statius "speak English," do with Oedipus' speech? His translation is certainly suitably impassioned:

Tisiphone! that oft hast heard my Pray'r,
 Assist, if *Oedipus* deserve thy Care!
 If you receiv'd me from *Jocasta's* Womb,
 And nurst the Hope of Mischiefs yet to come:
 If leaving *Polybus*, I took my Way
 To *Cyrrha's* Temple on that fatal Day,
 When by the Son the trembling father dy'd,
 Where the three Roads the *Phocian* Fields divide:
 If I the *Sphynxe's* Riddles durst explain,
 Taught by thy self to win the promis'd Reign:
 If wretched I, by baleful Furies led,
 With monstrous Mixture stain'd my Mother's Bed,
 For Hell and Thee begot an impious Brood,
 And with full Lust those horrid Joys renew'd:
 Then self-condemn'd to Shades of endless Night,
 Forc'd from these Orbs the bleeding Balls of Sight.

Oh hear, and aid the Vengeance I require;
If worthy Thee, and what Thou might'st inspire!

Pope adopts the English epic idiom of his day, so thoroughly shaped by Dryden in particular.⁴⁸ The rhyming couplets help give structure and rhetorical power to this lengthy period, although at the cost of obscuring Statius' enjambments: three of the five *si* clauses in the Latin do not coincide with line beginnings. But the translation has notable omissions (assuming Pope had the same text in front of him) of words (*gremio*, the important word *falso*, *regem*, *senis*, *iniquae*) and of whole phrases (*traiectum uulnere plantas / firmasti, scis ipsa*); it has additions ("on that fatal Day," "to win the promis'd Reign"); and it has mistranslations ("If wretched I, by baleful Furies led"). One striking omission is of the sentence *miseraque oculos in matre reliqui* (72): in a gruesome and grotesque moment, typical of imperial epic, the Latin does actually say, "I left my eyes upon my poor mother." This represents a telling challenge to all translators, most of whom, including Pope, shy away from the physicality of this line.⁴⁹

In short, Pope "assimilates Statius to an English Augustan poetic."⁵⁰ How he does this is explained lucidly and precisely by Sowerby in an extensive discussion which includes close analysis of particular passages: he heightened the solemnity of the original and made it conform to the Augustan aesthetic that valued precision and control.⁵¹ According to Sowerby, Pope's virtuosic deployment of rhyming couplets works against authenticity in the case of Statius. Sowerby does not address Pope's remarkable omission of lines 408–81 of the Latin, which he bridges with an inserted couplet at (his) lines 563–4. But Pope's stated reasons for his omission, preserved in his correspondence with his mentor Henry Cromwell, accord with his desire (conscious or otherwise) to assimilate Statius to his contemporary poetic ideals. Pope calls the narrative of the fist-fight between Polynices and Tydeus "an odd account of an Unmannerly Batle at fistycuffs between the *two Princes* on a Very slight Occasion, & at a

48 See Audra and Williams (1961) 216, on Pope's avowed debt to Dryden, and Sowerby (2006) 210.

49 Poynton (1971): "left them sightlessly / Upon my stricken mother still to gaze" (honest, but the uneasy expansion [partly driven by metrical necessity?] betrays his discomfort); Melville (1992) sidesteps: "left my sightless eyes to gaze upon / My wretched mother"; Joyce (2008) is honest: "left my eyes on my wretched mother"; Ross (2004) embraces it: "my fingers tore my eyes out in revenge / and dropped them on my mother's prostrate form." Ritchie, Hall, and Edwards (Hall *et al.* [2007] 2) have "left my eyes in sight of my wretched mother," which evades the effect of horror.

50 Gillespie (2011) 86.

51 Sowerby (2006) 209–27.

time when one would think the fatigue of their Journey in so Tempestuous a Night might have renderd 'em Very unfit for such a Scuffle."⁵² I shall return to this omission below.

Describing Tisiphone

Statius is also much praised for his descriptive powers. Let us examine a passage of narrative, where Tisiphone responds with alacrity to Oedipus' summons. Lewis provides a bravura version of Statius' horrific description of Tisiphone (Lewis lines 141–52 *Theb.* 1.106–17):

Her bloated Skin with gather'd Venom teems,
And her foul Mouth exhales sulphureous Steams.
Disease and Death's annihilating Force
From hence, as she commissions, bend their Course.
Some stiffen'd Rags were o'er her Shoulders thrown,
And the dire Monster by her Dress was known.
A crested Serpent arm'd her better Hand,
And in the left she toss'd a flaming Brand.
When now she stood where craggy Cliffs arise,
And proud *Cithaeron* threatens the neighb'ring Skies,
Rang'd on her Head, the scaly Monsters glare,
And hiss, entwinn'd in her envenom'd Hair.

Lewis captures the essence of the Latin text, with very few casualties (he omits line 111 and weakens the specific geopolitical references of lines 116–17):

suffusa ueneno
tenditur ac sanie gliscit cutis; igneus atro
ore uapor, quo longa sitis morbique famesque
et populis mors una uenit; riget horrida tergo
palla, et caerulei redeunt in pectora nodi:
Atropos hos atque ipsa nouat Proserpina cultus.
tum geminas quatit ira manus: haec igne rogali
fulgurat, haec uiuo manus aera uerberat hydro.
ut stetit, abrupta qua plurimus arce Cithaeron

52 Sherburn (1956) 37, from the letter of January 19, 1708 (probably).

occurrit caelo, fera sibila crine uirenti
 congeminat, signum terris, unde omnis Achaei
 ora maris late Pelopeaque regna resultant.

THEB. 1.106–17

The weakest element is his omission of *sitis* and *fames* from the list of emanations from Tisiphone's mouth (108–9); Pope, however, understands precisely what is required (Pope lines 152–3):

From ev'ry Blast of her contagious Breath,
 Famine and Drought proceed, and Plagues, and Death.

Haec Inter Fratres Pietas

The next touchstone I shall consider is a brief but pithy and ironic authorial comment by Statius:

haec inter fratres pietas erat, haec mora pugnae
 sola nec in regem perduratura secundum.

THEB. 1.142–3

Statius here ironically labels the agreement between the brothers to hold power in alternate years *pietas*, a Roman concept notoriously difficult to translate;⁵³ he calls this agreement the only thing preventing conflict; and with the striking (negated) future participle *perduratura* (“destined to last long”) he indicates that this delay was only temporary. Here is a conspectus of all seven verse translations, in chronological order. Stephens has (lines 179–80):

This was that league, their wars were stopt upon:
 Scarce lasting to the next Succession.

Pope is clearly dependent here on Stephens (198–9):

Thus did the League their impious Arms restrain
 But scarce subsisted to the Second Reign.

53 As remarked by Dryden in the “Dedication” to his *Aeneis*, in which he discusses the challenges of translating into English.

Both renditions are too brief and miss some of the nuanced power of the Latin. Lewis devotes two couplets to the lines, but most of the extra verbiage is filler and interpretation (185–8):

Nor long this League withheld their impious Hands,
 From executing Discord's dire Commands:
 But ere one Year was clos'd, they both gave way
 To fierce Contention, and Desire of Sway.

The modern translators all unpack the implications of *pietas* with greater success, using four different English words for *pietas*. Poynton's first line brilliantly reproduces the taut muscularity of Statius' line 142 (stanza 19 lines 6–7):

This did love's work, this held them from the fight,
 Fought ere the sceptre graced a second hand.

Melville prefers “duty” to “love” and reproduces the future participle succinctly:

This served as loyal duty; this alone
 Delayed resort to arms, though not to last
 Into a second reign.

The rhythm of Ross' version is powerful and captures the structure of Statius' lines well:

Such was fraternal piety; such then
 the only way to stop dissent, nor would
 peace last until a second term begins.

Finally Joyce with her longer line is probably the closest to the Latin; again her first line is powerful, but the phrase “to the second regime” with its many syllables and floppy rhythm is too weak:

*This was the bond between the brothers, this their sole stay
 of battle—a pact that would not last to the second regime.*

Polynices and Tydeus Fight

I close with a glance at the passage disdained by Pope, the fist-fight between Polynices and Tydeus on the porch of Adrastus, king of Argos (see above). What

precisely did Pope object to here? Statius is honest in calling it *nudam . . . pugnam* (1.413) and he cleverly inserts (428–30) an explanation of why they must fight with fists and not swords (or else Tydeus might have killed Polynices and there would have been no fraternal conflict and climactic duel). Let's assume Pope's problem is with the brute physicality of lines 418–27:

iam crebros ictus ora et caua tempora circum
 obnixa ingeminant, telorum aut grandinis instar
 Rhipaeae, flexoque genu uacua ilia tundunt.
 non aliter quam Pisaeo sua lustra Tonanti
 cum redeunt crudisque uirum sudoribus ardet
 pulvis; at hinc teneros caueae dissensus ephebos
 concitat, exclusaeque expectant praemia matres:
 sic alacres odio nullaue cupidine laudis
 accensi incurrunt, scrutatur et intima uultus
 unca manus penitusque oculis cedentibus intrat.

THEB. 1.418–27

The repeated punches to the face and temples, the sheer effort, the knees bent to provide extra leverage for pummeling the flanks, the energy and hatred and passion of the combatants, with hooked hands trying to gouge out eyes⁵⁴—these actions do not easily conform to the Augustan poetic sensibility (although it seems that Pope has fewer scruples when he translates the threats traded by Odysseus and Irus at the start of *Odyssey* 18). Even the simile resists incorporation into that aesthetic: the comparison with Olympic athletes might at first sight seem to dignify Polynices and Tydeus, but then we realize that, despite *non aliter quam*, Statius is not actually offering a comparison so much as a contrast, because his fighters are not interested in glory but motivated by pure hatred.

Melville's rendition captures the tone precisely (with one notable lapse, in the choice of "loins," a word which no one understands these days and which sounds fustian); in particular, he understands very well how the Olympic simile works, with its comparison focusing on *sic alacres . . . incurrunt*:

54 The emphasis on the eyes reprises Statius' introduction of Oedipus by reference to his gouging out his own eyes, using the same verb, *scrutari* (*Theb.* 1.46), a fact we are reminded of insistently at lines 53, 71–2, 74 and 78. Statius clearly revels in the motif. Translators need not flinch.

Then, as they battle, blow on blow is struck
 On face and forehead, thick as arrows fall
 Or Arctic hail, and knees are flexed to bruise
 Soft sides and loins. Like, when the years bring on
 Jove's contests at Olympia and the dust
 Is hot with men's raw sweat and, seated round,
 Crowds urge the young lads on with rival cries,
 And mothers wait outside to hail the prize,
 So those two charged, fired by no love of fame—
 Hate was the spur—and deep into each face
 The fingers scratch and probe and penetrate
 Their flinching eyes.

Ross responds to the physicality of the encounter even more strongly, starting:

They aimed quick jabs head-high, redoubling blows
 around the ears and temples, flurries thick
 as flights of arrows or Rhipaeian hail,
 then bent their knees to pummel hollow flanks.

Joyce in her longer line has an odd mixture of vocabulary that suggests she is unsure what register to aim for:

So they closed, delivering blows to cheekbones and hollow
 temples—thick as a volley of arrows, a storm of Rhiphaean
 hail; bent knees slammed into unprotected groins.

In all these translations, the choice of non-Latinate monosyllables seems the best strategy, since the Latin description of the combat itself (though not the similes) is in relatively simple language.

This takes me to my concluding observation: that several translators seem inspired to deploy unusual English words or to coin new ones. This is rarely, if ever, justified by Statius' Latinity. For example, Pope has "Town's dispeopl'd" (55, for *egestas . . . urbes*, *Theb.* 1.37), "flagitious Pride" (107, for *superbi*, 76), and "remurmur'd" (166, for *audii*, 118), while Joyce has "the lucent horses" (for *lucentes . . . equos*, 1.98) and "joy sizzled" (for *laetus . . . horror iit*, 493–4).⁵⁵ On the other hand, Poynton's coinages are usually more justifiable, for example,

55 Cf. Austin and Morse (1991): "asperging the walls" (line 777 of their translation of book 10, for *moenia lustrat*).

“aflare” (stanza 15 line 9, for *fulgurat*, 1.113) and the neat phrase “royal carrion” (stanza 5 line 8, for *tumulis . . . carentia regum / funera*, 1.36–7). Coinages certainly do not contribute to the “naturalization” of a Latin poem which self-consciously projects itself as a “Vergilian palimpsest,” even if its world is “more brutal and more horrific” than that of the *Aeneid*.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Statius evidently strains the Latin language at times, as Melville understands (see above), and that could be offered as a justification for straining the English translation too. How far to go in “naturalizing” a poet that is full of unnatural passions must ultimately be left to each translator to decide. I give the last word to the most recent translator: Joyce astutely writes: “To translate a poem dominated by doubles is to make a mirror from a mirror. Distortions, inevitable in any translation, are twofold.”⁵⁷

56 Cf. above, pp. 584–5; on the relation between *Thebaid* and *Aeneid*, see, e.g., Hardie (1993) and Ganiban (2007).

57 Joyce (2008) xxxiii. I wish to express my deep thanks to the editors for their patience and to Ace Krupkin for her careful work on the formatting and presentation of this chapter.

Statius in an Ideological Climate

Carole E. Newlands

The rediscovery of Statius' *Silvae* in the fifteenth century created initial excitement among philologists, who welcomed a new work by this eminent Latin poet. Yet paradoxically that discovery led to a decline in Statius' reputation. First the text was found to be difficult and obscure, in part because of the poor copy that Poggio Bracciolini had made and brought to Italy; it is only the past twenty years that have given us sound texts of the *Silvae*, thanks to Courtney and Shackleton Bailey and the work of commentators.¹ Secondly, the *Silvae* were found to include poems praising Domitian, widely regarded as a tyrant even worse than Nero. In fact only seven of the twenty-seven of the *Silvae* published in Statius' lifetime have to do with Domitian or his court; but their presence has overshadowed the rest of the poems. Statius' *Silvae*, and by association the *Thebaid*, thus have been implicated in a negative way with politics from the start; Vessey, for instance, comments, "[Statius'] poetry reflects and reproduces the oppressive spirit of Domitian's court."²

Decadence of style and decadence of political regime have thus commonly been seen to go hand in hand in criticism of Statius. Although literary criticism over the past three decades, along with revisionary historical assessments of Domitian, have done much to challenge this negative perception of Statius and his poetry,³ stereotypes die hard and continue to be enshrined on library shelves in literary histories and standard works of criticism.⁴ In this chapter I will argue that despite the renewed appreciation of Statius' poetry today, nonetheless his reputation still carries some of the burden of the political factionalism of the period of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries in Europe and the United States. His relegation till recently to a minor place in the Latin

1 Courtney (1992); Shackleton Bailey (2003) 1; the modern commentaries are: van Dam (1984) and Newlands (2011b) on book 2; Laguna (1992) on book 3; Coleman (1988) on book 4; Gibson (2006) on book 5; and Liberman (2010) on the entire collection. On the rediscovery of the *Silvae* and their textual tradition, see Reeve (1983) 397–9; also the introduction to this volume, pp. 6–7.

2 Vessey (1973) 13.

3 See, for instance, the revisionary history of Domitian's reign by Jones (1992).

4 See the introduction to this volume, p. 2.

literary canon reflects in part the triumph of puritan and Republican ideology, in part the tendency of literary historians not to read the works they legislate about; traces of such peremptory dismissals still linger in the often minor place Statius can hold in our classroom curricula today. My focus will be mostly the *Silvae*, but I will discuss the *Thebaid* too, since Statius' reputation is particularly closely intertwined with both works.

Seventeenth-century England

The first translator of Statius into English was Thomas Stephens (d. 1677); he also wrote a commentary on the Latin text of the *Silvae* and *Achilleid*. But Stephens chose to publish his translation of the first five books of the *Thebaid* at the wrong time, in 1648, at the end of the English civil war between the supporters of Charles I—the royalists—and the Puritans, who were supporters of parliamentary democracy. As Norbrook has shown, Thomas May's translation of Lucan in 1627 demonstrates the politically partisan nature of translation at this time.⁵ But Stephens was on the *wrong* side of the civil war—he was a royalist.⁶ He was principal of the prestigious grammar school at Bury St. Edmunds near Cambridge, and in his preface he claims that the translation was intended for his pupils: “the translation was meditated, midst all the clamour and imployments of a publike Schoole . . . it was intended as a help to my Scholars, for understanding the Poet.”⁷ Thus, as Braund points out in her chapter for this volume, Stephens attempts to naturalize Statius' Latin with his English translation and accompanying, basic notes.⁸

At the same time, there is an element of disingenuousness about Stephens' claim that the translation is primarily a school text, since his is the first translation into English of the *Thebaid*. And this in itself is a major event. Moreover, the paratextual material and the shaping of the translation both practice a

5 Norbrook (1998) 23–62.

6 A retrospective, anonymous review of Stephens' work published in *Gentleman's Magazine* 33 (1850) 35–40 points out that Stephens, who was also a doctor of divinity, preached sermons hostile to Cromwell and the Puritans (though he was silent from 1642–1660, from the start of the civil war to the Restoration). On Stephens' royalist beliefs and connections, see Mengelkoch (2010b).

7 Stephens (1648) *praef.* A4r. On the pedagogical career of Thomas Stephens, see Elliott (1963); for a brief account of his life and career see Dominik (2004).

8 Braund, pp. 582–3 in this volume. On the value of Stephens' notes, see also Berlincourt (2013a) 89–93. Gillespie (1999) 160–1 is more negative about the literary merits of Stephens' translation of the *Thebaid*.

form of “safe criticism” in that they reflect Stephens’ partisan views. He may claim in the preface that his primary readership is his schoolboys, but the work is dedicated to two royalist aristocrats who were at that time in exile:⁹

NOBILI AMICORUM PARI, Do. GULIELMO PASTON BARONETTO, ET
Do. GULIELMO D'OYLY EQU: AURATO, MUSARUM EXULUM ASYLIS
ET RELIGIONIS PROFLIGATAE ASSERTORIBUS, PATRONIS EIUS
PLURIMUM HONORANDIS . . .

To the noble pair of friends, Master William Paston Baronet, and Master William D'Oyly, Golden Knight, refuges for the exiled muses and defenders of a defeated religion, patrons greatly to be honored . . .

Stephens here provocatively links divinely inspired poetry (by the Muses) and Anglican religion, as if there could be no true poetry without the restoration of true religion under the rule of the English monarchy. Moreover, the translation’s publication by a London firm with royalist sympathies, Richard Royston, suggests that Stephen was aiming for a wider public.¹⁰

Stephens translated only five books of the *Thebaid*, suggesting at the end of his preface to the reader that he would do more should the translation meet with success.¹¹ In fact, as Mengelkoch points out, the epic story after book 5 does not fit well with Stephens’ political views.¹² In his translation Stephens reimagines the *Thebaid* as a royalist epic, supportive of monarchy wisely exercised. The Theban “scepter,” for instance, is consistently translated as “Crowne.”¹³ Tellingly, Stephens ends his translation of Statius’ epic *before* monarchy collapses and the heroic code unravels; indeed book 5 ends with a positive example of kingly behavior when King Adrastus calms an angry crowd and makes peace with King Lycurgus (*Theb.* 5.690–753).¹⁴ The version of the *Thebaid* that Stephens produced in English in 1648 demonstrates the virtues of

9 On the display of Stephens’ royalist views in the translation’s paratexts, see Mengelkoch (2010b) 161–5, 202–3. As he notes, Stephens’ modesty has not served him well, as it has contributed to the neglect of his translation.

10 Mengelkoch (2010b) 164–5.

11 Stephens (1648) *praef.* A4r.

12 Mengelkoch (2010b) 185–6. Berlincourt (2013a) 93 suggests rather that the translation of the first five books was designed to introduce students to the delights of Statius’ Latin, demonstrated in the editions of the *Silvae* and *Achilleid* that followed three years later.

13 On Stephens’ reshaping of Statius’ text to reflect his religious and political views, see Mengelkoch (2010b) 186–99.

14 On this ending, see Newlands (2012) 106–7.

a strong monarchical system of government and the evils of political discord; as Mengelkoch comments, in Stephens' English translation "Thebes is no longer the other . . . it is a metaphor to examine civil war, monarchical power, and problems of dynastic succession."¹⁵

Figuratively, Stephens' translation returns the "exiled Muses" to England in Latin dress. Stephens seems to have seen in Statius' *Thebaid* a poem for his times that, translated, could provide an oblique commentary on English politics and the crisis of monarchy. But the translation also, as Berlincourt has pointed out, served the function of introducing a new generation of young scholars to Statius' poetry in a period increasingly hostile to his aesthetics as well as to his politics.¹⁶ When three years later Stephens published Latin editions of the *Silvae* and *Achilleid*, he did so under the new puritanical Commonwealth of England, and with an awareness that this second endeavor ran counter to the political and cultural mood of the times.

In the preface to the *Silvae* Stephens engages in a polemic against Statius' critics, showing how closely politics, ethics, and aesthetics were linked in the reception of this Roman poet. By boldly putting forward the *Silvae* as an appropriate model of style for his students, Stephens has to defend his unconventional choice of work against the charge of the poet's decadence and excess:

et quidem causantur eum praetumidum, et grandiloquentiorem quam par est . . . cuius imitatio tersam et aequabilem sermonum castitatem in iuuenibus corrumpat . . .¹⁷

Some carp that he [Statius] is excessively swollen and more grandiloquent than is right . . . imitating him would corrupt the taut and balanced chastity of speech in our youths . . .

Stephens here connects terms of style with terms of moral value; Statius' critics complain that his style is "excessively swollen," the epithet *praetumidus* alone suggesting both rhetorical bombast and the swollen body of the self-indulgent male or of the pregnant woman.¹⁸ Corruption of style is thus associated with

15 Mengelkoch (2010b) 184; see further 149–211.

16 Berlincourt (2013a) 93.

17 Stephens (1651) *praef.* A3r.

18 "Tumidity" (or excess) was a common charge leveled against Statius; Stephens rephrases the elder Scaliger's defense of Statius' style in the *Thebaid* (quoted in Heslin [2005] xvii). Scaliger however argued, *contra* Poliziano, that the *Silvae* exhibited *tumor* rather than the *Thebaid* (*Poetices Libri Septem* 6.6.776). Poliziano in his introduction to his lectures

the corruption of bodily chastity, whereas both an ideal style and ideal masculinity are “taut” or “restrained” and “balanced.” The gendering of rhetorical terms goes back of course to classical times, but the Puritans added a religious dimension. For the Puritans literature was to be edifying rather than pleasing; chastity was a central tenet of their faith. But Stephens throws the charge of excess right back at the detractors:

instar ranae Aesopicae excrescant, quae, ut aequaret bouem, se distendebat dum crepuit. sed eum a calumnia hac satis uindicant tum aurea eius Opera, tum aliorum Elogia . . . in eo dextrum ingenium, pura et tamen florida locutio, argumentum uarium, decoctus et amussitatus stylus.¹⁹

They [sc. the critics] grow out of proportion like Aesop’s frog, who, to emulate a bull, swelled until it popped. But he is vindicated sufficiently from calumny by his golden works, and the praises of others . . . in him you find judicious talent, pure and yet flowery speech, variety of themes, mature and polished style.

With the phrase *pura et tamen florida locutio*, Stephens argues that “flowery speech” can be a virtue of both style and behavior (flowers after all can signify purity, for instance, the lily). Stephens also sarcastically pins the charge of excess not on Statius but on his critics. Provocatively he acknowledges instead the precision and careful polish of Statius’ style which he describes as *decoctus et amussitatus*. *Decoctus* literally means “boiled down,” so the metaphor vividly conveys a sense of compression or concision. The term *amussitatus* is an epithet drawn from a carpenter’s or mason’s workshop; an *amussis* is a straight ruler, and the adjectival form of this word means “created with precision.” Stephens thus associates Statius with superbly finished and also honest work.

The character of the *Silvae* as occasional poems, their experiments with courtly and elite address, their wit and elegance, are features also of “Cavalier” poetics—that is, of the poetry produced by Royalists in the early and mid-seventeenth century. Stephens may have hoped that by publishing Statius’ works as school texts he could shape his pupils’ political and cultural attitudes; after all, as Keith has shown, the use of classical epic in the schoolroom, in

on the *Silvae* claims that that they have more polish than a longer work, where, as in an open plain blasted from time to time by great winds, the style can vary from grandeur to flat exhaustion (Martinelli [1978] 9). For the stylistic debate, see also Mengelkoch, pp. 562–78 in this volume.

19 Stephens (1651) *praef.* A3.

particular Vergil's *Aeneid*, had an ideological purpose, to acculturate elite youth to Roman social and political conventions and inculcate virtues of Roman manliness.²⁰ Stephens may too have hoped that by publishing Statius' poems as school texts, he would evade censorship. But this was an age hostile on ideological grounds to non-religious poetry; moreover, as Mengelkoch shows in his chapter for this volume, epic poetry itself at this time was in crisis, for its heroic code was closely associated with royalist values and, like Cavalier lyric poetry, was seen as an elite, politically regressive and morally decadent form.²¹ As Heslin too has shown, the situation for Statius did not improve with the restoration of the British monarchy, for Statius was associated with admiration for unrestrained autocracy. Poet-laureate John Dryden took up his cudgels against Statius, condemning him for an equivalent lack of restraint in his poetry.²² Thus, as Gillespie shows in his survey of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century reception of Statius, Stephens' work on Statius fell into obscurity, with one small but notable exception: Pope used Stephens' translation in his own translation of book 1 of the *Thebaid*.²³ But in style, theme, and moral and political persuasion the Roman poet—and Stephens with him—were seriously out of joint with Puritan times and with the new political and aesthetic ideals of the Restoration of the monarchy.

Nineteenth-century France

As Heslin points out, the rigid classicism of French critics also had a profound effect on the literary polemic underpinning neoclassical poetics in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England.²⁴ To turn now to the nineteenth century and post-Revolutionary France, the rhetoric of Roman literary decline became a powerful, persistent trope in this period as nations such as the French second Republic reflected on their new political identities; moreover, academic organization of the humanities started to take shape in the late nineteenth century, seeking structure for their disciplines in coherent literary histories.

20 Keith (2000) 8–35. At 8–9 she notes that in the epilogue to the *Thebaid* (12.812–15) Statius aspires for a place in the classical curriculum of the schools on the model of Vergil.

21 Hammond (1998) argues that this was a period in general hostile to epic poetry, for epic (pre-Milton) was closely associated with nationalism, and England, after the execution of Charles I in January 1649, was confused about its identity as a nation.

22 Heslin (2005) xiv–xviii; see also Mengelkoch, p. 573 n. 29 in this volume.

23 Gillespie (1999).

24 Heslin (2005) xiv–xv.

The great nineteenth-century German historians Niebuhr and Mommsen were also prominent statesmen; Rome provided valuable political, moral, and literary lessons in its rise to greatness and in its decline from the time of Augustus or Tiberius on. The French scholar Desiré Nisard (1808–1888), however, gave a personal name and a character to Roman decline: Statius.

Nisard was professor of literature in Paris and eventually rose to the influential position of inspector general of education in France. His monumental work, *Études de mœurs et de critique sur les poètes Latins de la décadence*, targeted Statius as the epitome of Rome's decline. It was printed in Paris in 1834, reprinted in 1849, and came to have a huge influence in the United States as well. In this work we find classicism used to define the character of the emergent French Republic and vigorously defended against the new movement of Romanticism that was sweeping Europe. Thus we find aesthetics, ethics, and the politics of national identity closely entwined in his critical evaluation of Statius. Nisard saw himself as a representative of good judgment and *healthy* theory; that is, he makes clear in his work that he does not separate moral from literary value. He opens his section on Statius with this caricature of our poet:

Voyez-vous Stace errant sous les galeries du palais d'Abascantius, l'oeil à demi fermé, la marche irrégulière, le poing contracté, les lèvres marmottantes, une grande mèche de cheveux, qu'il ramène d'ordinaire sur le haut de sa tête, flottant au gré du vent qui souffle sous ces portiques, une sorte de front haut et intelligent, mais qui paraît creux, un manteaux grec bien porté, car Stace met de la coquetterie à bien copier la Grèce . . . allez le toucher du doigt, il en sortira un hexamètre ou un pentamètre, comme il sort un son de la cloche qu'on a frappé.²⁵

See here comes Statius wandering through the galleries of the palace of Abascantus, eyes half shut, irregular of gait, fist clenched, murmuring lips, a huge lock of hair, which he usually combs over the crown of his head, floating at the will of the breeze that blows through the colonnades, a forehead seemingly high and intelligent but which turns out to be hollow, a Greek cloak well draped, for Statius adopts the coquetry of imitating Greece to a T . . . go touch him with a finger, he will produce a hexameter or a pentameter, sounding like a clock that has been struck.

Nisard here clothes the concept of literary decadence as Statius, dressed as an effeminate French fop, a man without morals who blows with the wind.

25 Nisard (1849) 261–2.

In particular, the irregular gait of this caricature of Statius captures Nisard's view of Statius' style; it is not measured, not classical, in tune with the decadent Romanticism of Nisard's day. We see here how closely rhetoric, morals, gender, and politics are intertwined; it is men like Statius who reveal the diseased condition of the state and who threaten the success of the new French Republic. And, for all Nisard's claims to good and healthy judgments, much of this portrait is fantasy, not least because Statius, for instance, never wrote in elegiacs, thus never wrote a pentameter line. Nisard goes on to comment, "il mit à louage son ventre et son talent" ("he put out for hire his stomach and his talent").²⁶ Statius is for Nisard a flatterer pure and simple, a "courtier" in the most servile sense—a figure of fun, to be sure, but also an admonitory figure in that he synecdochically represents the decadence of a once great state and civilization.

Nisard's condemnation of Statius is thus affected by his own neoclassical views of literary and indeed sexual decorum; he detested the rise of Romanticism. He calls Statius "the Sgricci of imperial Rome,"²⁷ a reference to the enormously popular but controversial Tommaso Sgricci, a flamboyant Italian improviser and performer of lyric poems, who had a sensational life style, was closely associated with the Romantic movement in France, and did not hide his homosexuality; he represented a way of life and a style of poetry that Nisard regarded as threatening to his concept of French national identity. For Nisard's literary judgment was also heavily inflected by his political ideology. For Nisard, a proud French Republican, Statius exemplifies the worst effects of the political system of monarchy, which could too frequently descend into autocracy.²⁸ At the end of his study of Roman literary decadence, Nisard compares France favorably to Rome: "elles avaient suivi la loi de progrès de decadence . . . la France seule a donné l'exemple d'une resurrection" ("Greece and Rome had followed the law of decline . . . France alone has given the example of resurrection").²⁹ Rome's literary decline was due to the loss of political freedom after the failure of the republic, but France through its revolution had defeated the natural law of political decline.

France's sense of possessing a fully developed historical consciousness was bolstered by the rediscovery and publication of the heroic poem *Chanson de Roland* in 1837; this poem was claimed as France's national epic and was

26 Nisard (1849) 265.

27 Nisard (1849) 261.

28 See Warren (2013) 120: "the development of textual scholarship in nineteenth-century Europe coincided with the consolidation of national identities."

29 Nisard (1849) 315.

promoted as endowing the French national character with a fundamentally epic spirit.³⁰ For Nisard, the weak, decadent post-Augustan Roman state finds its embodiment in the feeble, unheroic, morally corrupt person and poetry of Statius. He does not discuss the *Thebaid*, for the *Silvae* work far better for Nisard's ideological purposes: Nisard castigates them as trivial, mundane, meaningless, the product of a culture whose writers, terrified of the imperial autocrats in control, no longer had anything to say. Moreover, Nisard targets the practice of *recitatio*, public readings, as symptomatic of a state and a literature in decline; Statius, among others, destroyed literature, and his soul, through a practice aimed at display, not sense.³¹ Statius, Nisard concludes, "teaches us nothing, is good at nothing, he gives nothing for the education of humanity, he sings of the hair of a eunuch, of a plane tree, the lion of Caesar."³²

Much as this critique may seem laughable now, Nisard's influence was widespread and pernicious. The success of the work was bolstered by a popular collected edition of Latin poets published under his supervision in 1842; as Berlincourt points out, the few notes accompanying the prose translation of Statius' poetry are typically negative. Nisard's Republicanism too had particular appeal in the United States. In published lectures given first on the east coast of the United States and Chicago, then as a distinguished series at Johns Hopkins University in 1893, Robert Tyrrell (1844–1914), Regius professor of Greek at Trinity College Dublin, openly draws on Nisard's "brilliant" portrayal of Statius as the emblem of Roman monarchical decadence, the mindless flatterer, and chief representative of a literary system destroyed by *recitatio*.³³ He also follows Nisard in making fictitious claims about Statius' *Silvae* in his brief section on the poet (the *Thebaid* does not merit a mention).³⁴ For instance, he writes, "the loss of a wife, a dog, a parrot, found in him a ready chronicler."³⁵ The dog is not present in Statius, but it is present in Nisard, who writes that Statius made verses for "this dog or that parrot";³⁶ both he and Tyrrell even include a turbot as the subject of one of Statius' poems, taken over of course from Juvenal's fourth *Satire* and definitely *not* in Statius:

30 See Warren (2013) 120–1.

31 Nisard (1849) 277–326.

32 Nisard (1849) 278.

33 Tyrrell (1895) 281–3, quote at 284.

34 See Tyrrell (1895) 283–5.

35 Tyrrell (1895) 284.

36 Nisard (1849) 265.

À celui qui venait de faire bâtir un palais, il fit la description et l'état de lieux de ce palais; à celui qui avait à son dîner un turbot pris à Ostie, il chanta l'excellence de ce turbot.³⁷

For the man who came to have a palace built, he made the description and inventory of this palace; for the man who had for his dinner a turbot caught at Ostia, he sang of the excellence of this turbot.

Tyrrell virtually paraphrases Nisard's words when he writes, "the building of a palace was not a theme too high for him, or the purchase of a turbot too low."³⁸ Had either of these eminent professors actually bothered to read the *Silvae*?

Such views of Statius as poet of excess and flattery, proof of the evils of monarchy, were popular in the American Republic and became entrenched in literary histories. Along with Merivale's *History of Rome under the Empire*,³⁹ now in the University of Michigan's "Making America" series and still available on amazon.com, Nisard and Tyrrell helped popularize a persistent notion of Statius as a commissioned poet, a derivative poet, and a decadent flatterer of a corrupt imperial state.⁴⁰ Merivale (1808–1893) at least discussed and, with reservations, admired the *Thebaid*.⁴¹ Departing from the prevailing criticism of the poem's excess, he found its structure admirably unified and compact; on the other hand he comments that "as regards his subject, Statius walks in fetters; he could not create or innovate."⁴² And he concludes with the conventional sentiment that Statius "would have done more justice to his powers, could he have renounced the insidious flatteries of his age."⁴³

Today of course, criticism of Statius has become far more diverse in the wake of revisionist histories of Domitian, such as that of Jones.⁴⁴ Moreover, post-Orwellian studies of doublespeak and anthropological studies of autocratic regimes, including recent dictatorships, have led to a more sophisticated understanding of the complex systems of social and cultural exchange

37 Nisard (1849) 265.

38 Tyrrell (1895) 284.

39 Merivale (1865).

40 Tyrrell (1895) 291–2 singles out for admiration chapter 64 of Merivale (1865) which discusses Flavian literature as the unimaginative product of the school system.

41 Merivale (1865) at least avoids Nisard's hysteria and provides a more finely judged assessment of the literature of this period. He discusses Statius at pp. 79–83, including the *Thebaid* in some detail (pp. 79–80).

42 Merivale (1865) 79.

43 Merivale (1865) 80.

44 Jones (1992).

between ruler and ruled. Thus Statius has for some scholars become a critic of contemporary society and politics or a skilled negotiator, rather than a flatterer. His poetry also has been seen to have contemporary relevance not only for Statius' times but for our own; in the words of Henderson, writing of the *Thebaid*, "for Thebes *spells* Guilt. Here. Now. Us."⁴⁵ In the introduction to his Loeb editions of Statius, Shackleton Bailey comments that Vergil is Statius' "unapproachable idol."⁴⁶ Yet increasingly, as we see from this volume, critics have rediscovered and celebrated the pluralism of Statius' poetry, a quality that the humanist Poliziano, the first major interpreter of the *Silvae*, admired, particularly in the sophistication with which Statius handles multiple sources and tonalities.⁴⁷ As Greene suggests, Poliziano, both poet and critic, was specially poised to appreciate Statius' poetry, since the Roman poet dealt brilliantly with issues of belatedness similar to his own.⁴⁸

But it is through literary histories and the Loeb editions that most readers today will encounter Statius, and Shackleton Bailey's 2003 editions, despite their many merits, remain influenced by the notion of Statius as a superficial poet.⁴⁹ In his introduction to his Loeb *Silvae* Shackleton Bailey does not discuss Statius' style but he comments in a footnote that Housman, "the best conceivable judge . . . did not greatly care for Statius" apart from the recognition that Statius was a "superb versifier" (note, not "poet").⁵⁰ So that one footnote tells us where Shackleton Bailey stands. Footnotes to his text and translation of the Loeb *Silvae* further the impression that Statius was a lightweight. For

45 Henderson (1991) 41. On these trends see the introduction to this volume, pp. 7–9.

46 Shackleton Bailey (2003) 2.3.

47 Poliziano gave his first university lectures on the *Silvae* in Florence in 1480–1481; these have been now been edited and published by Martinelli (1978). See, e.g., Poliziano on *Silvae* 2.1 in Martinelli (1978) 437: *cum interim haec omnia apposite eleganterque collocata distinctaque figuris omnigenis, uerbis, sententiis argumentisque exornata sunt, ut quasi corona quaedam Musis dedicanda ex delectissimis floribus possit haec elegantissima Syluula appellari* ("In short, all these themes have been appropriately and elegantly arranged and marked out with all kinds of figures, and adorned with words, choice expressions, and thoughts; as a result, this could be called the most elegant of the *Silvae*, for like a garland of the most choice flowers it should be dedicated to the Muses"). See also on Poliziano and Statius Mengelkoch (2010b) 1–46.

48 Greene (1982) 147–55.

49 The reputation of the *Silvae* has been slower to recover than that of the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*. In the literary historical survey by Ash and Sharrock (2002) of fifty major classical authors, Statius makes the cut (334–42), and his *Thebaid* is granted serious attention, but his *Silvae* are mentioned only briefly (one paragraph, 340) to the effect that they are short poems on a variety of themes; their dates of publication are also given.

50 Shackleton Bailey (2003) 1.6 n. 3.

example, on *Silvae* 2.5, a poem about the killing of a lion in the amphitheater by an unspecified wild beast, Shackleton Bailey writes, “What beast? The emperor would know and Statius has not *thought* or not troubled to inform later poets” (my italics).⁵¹ I detect an echo here of Tyrell’s condemnation of Statius to the effect that, “words seem to have come to Statius before thoughts. It is a question . . . whether there are innate ideas, but he seems to have had innate verses.”⁵²

In the introduction to her 2007 partial commentary on *Thebaid* 4, Micozzi uses fresh terms for talking about Statius’ poetry: though the catalogue of troops, as she observes, is a convention that has a tendency to foster “excess” in the forms of ornamentation and digression, she emphasizes the “novelty” of Statius’ approach, and she talks of the distinctive richness and also precision of Statius’ allusiveness.⁵³ She ends her introduction with this polemical invitation to rethink our traditional ideas of Statius’ style: “il tratto distintivo di Stazio è infatti l’addensare più che l’abbondare” (“Statius’ distinctive trait is in fact compression rather than excess”).⁵⁴ Micozzi here attempts to free Statius from the historical burden of political and literary stereotyping as an extravagant and decadent poet. Unlike Vessey, whom I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, and like Stephens in the preface to his *Silvae*, Micozzi understands that, at the very least, Statius’ poetry, with its densely allusive qualities and its capacity for irony, self-reflection, and ambiguity, can challenge social and political conditions rather than mindlessly reproduce them. Or, to give the *Silvae* the last words, a recent translator, Howell, comments of these poems, “the tone of Statius’ voice can sound distinctly modern.”⁵⁵

51 Shackleton Bailey (2003) 1.147 n. 1.

52 Tyrrell (1895) 284.

53 Excess continues to be a charge against Statius’ style in the *Thebaid* as well as the *Silvae*. See Vessey (1973) 7–14; Parkes (2012) xx–xxi; and above, n. 18.

54 Micozzi (2007b) 16.

55 Howell and Shepherd (2007) 14. Thanks to Peter Knox for suggesting my chapter title through his invitation to speak at the Presidential Panel “Philology in an Ideology Climate,” CAMWS 2013 Iowa City. Thanks also not only to William Dominik for generously sharing his research on Thomas Stephens but also to Victoria Pagán for reading an earlier version of this paper at the Statius International Conference held at the University of Santiago de Compostela in June 2013.

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